



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

### Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

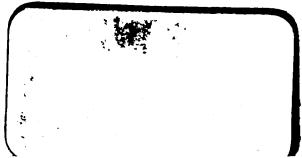
### About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>





6000237001



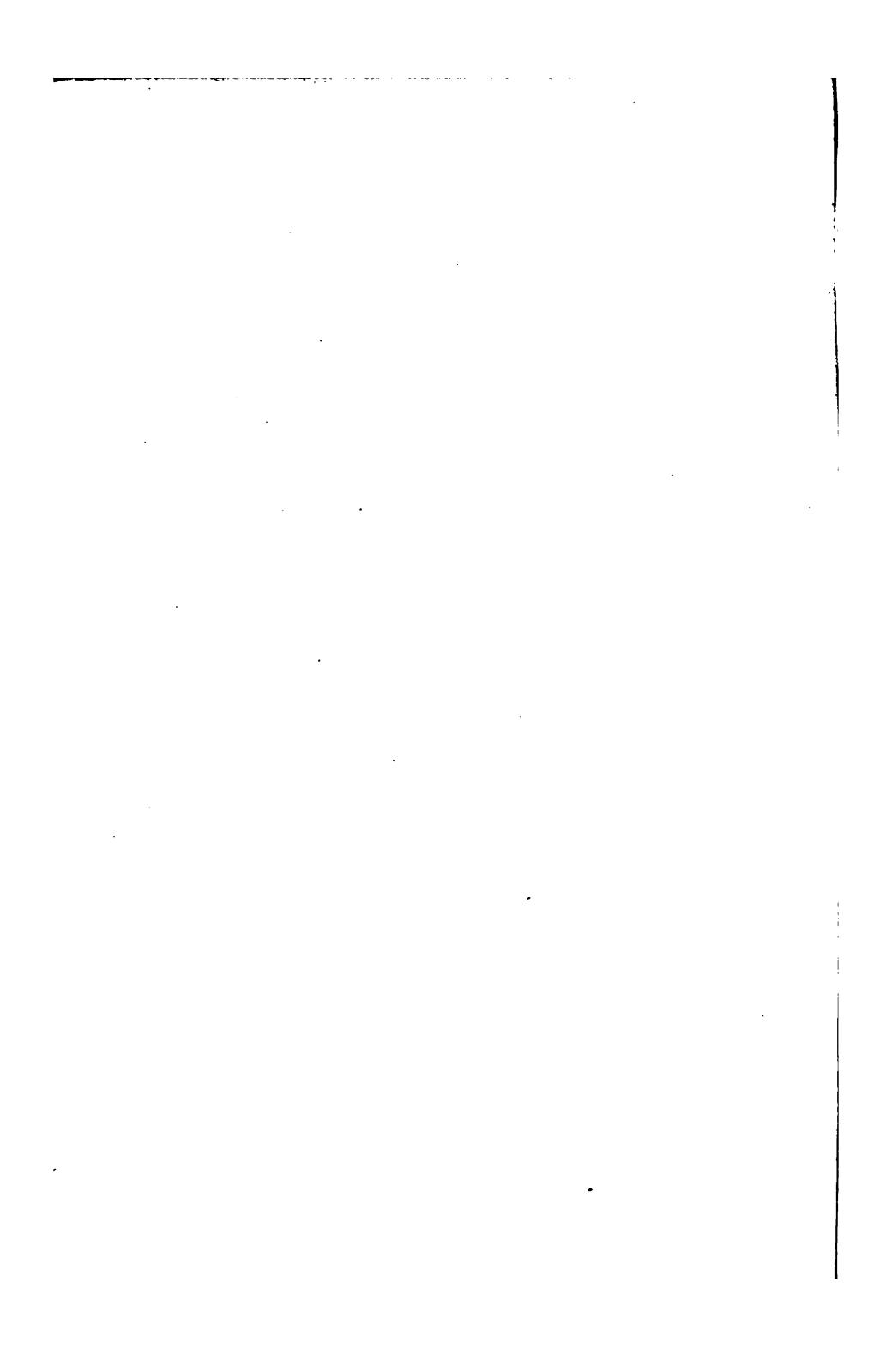




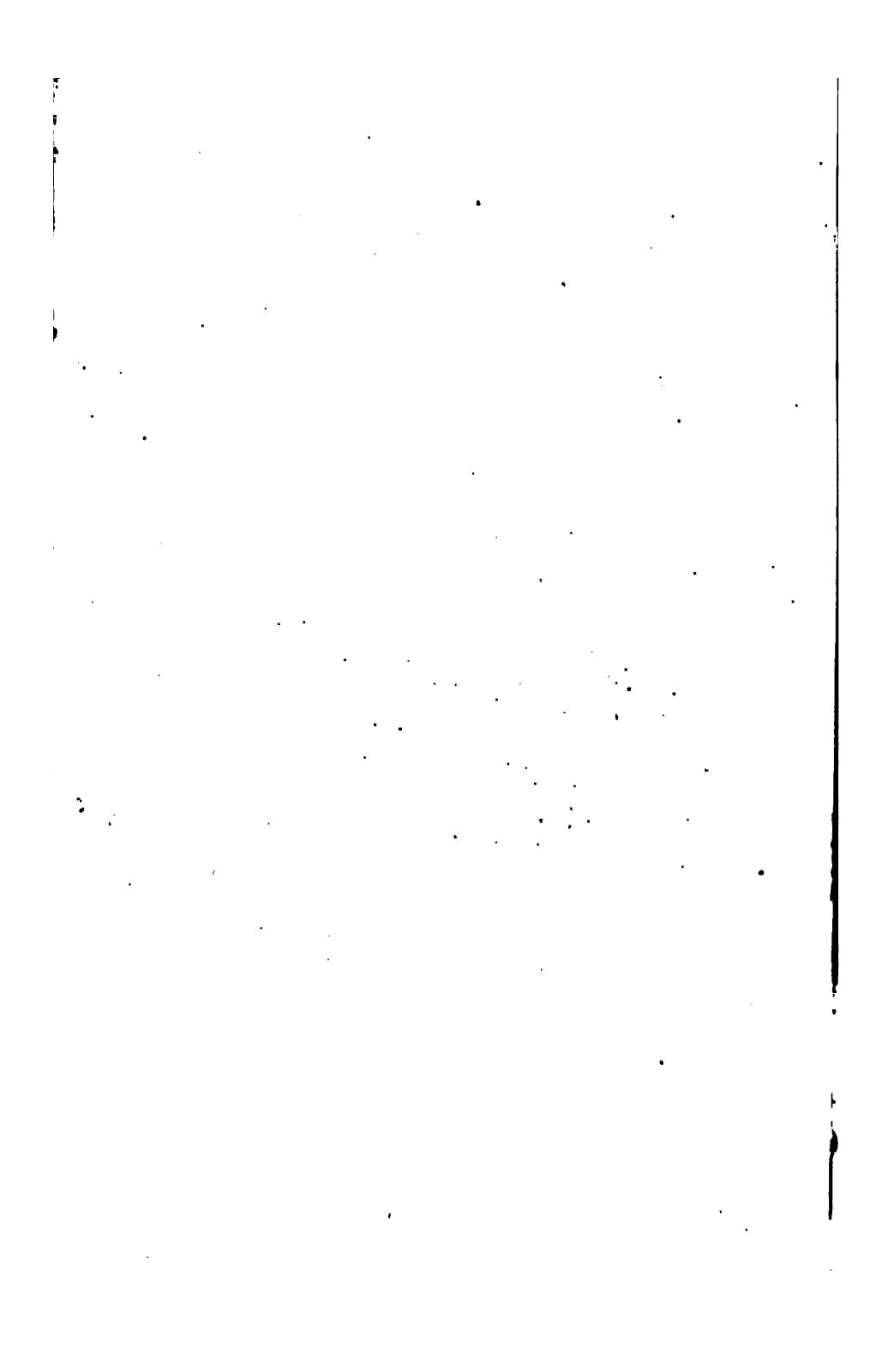
6000237001







A BOOK OF THE PLAY.



A  
BOOK OF THE PLAY:

*Studies and Illustrations of Histrionic Story,  
Life, and Character.*

BY  
DUTTON COOK,

AUTHOR OF  
"ART IN ENGLAND," "HOBSON'S CHOICE," "PAUL FOSTER'S DAUGHTER,"  
"BANNS OF MARRIAGE," ETC. ETC.

In Two Volumes.

VOL. II.



London:  
SAMPSON LOW, MARSTON, SEARLE, & RIVINGTON.  
CROWN BUILDINGS, FLEET STREET.  
1876.  
[All Rights Reserved.]

CHARLES DICKENS AND EVANS,  
CRYSTAL PALACE PRESS.

## CONTENTS.

---

### CHAPTER I.

	PAGE
HALF-PRICE AT NINE O'CLOCK.	1

### CHAPTER II.

THE DRAMA UNDER DIFFICULTIES	15
------------------------------	----

### CHAPTER III.

STAGE BANQUETS	38
----------------	----

### CHAPTER IV.

STAGE WIGS	49
------------	----

### CHAPTER V.

ALARUMS AND EXCURSIONS	69
------------------------	----

**CHAPTER VI.**

STAGE STORMS	PAGE 84
--------------	------------

**CHAPTER VII.**

DOUBLES	102
---------	-----

**CHAPTER VIII.**

BENEFITS	123
----------	-----

**CHAPTER IX.**

THUNDERS OF APPLAUSE	147
----------------------	-----

**CHAPTER X.**

REAL HORSES	180
-------------	-----

**CHAPTER XI.**

THE "SUPER"	191
-------------	-----

**CHAPTER XII.**

"GAG"	214
-------	-----

**CHAPTER XIII.**

BALLET'S AND BALLET-DANCERS	236
-----------------------------	-----

**CHAPTER XIV.**

CORRECT COSTUMES	258
------------------	-----

*CONTENTS.*

vii

---

CHAPTER XV.

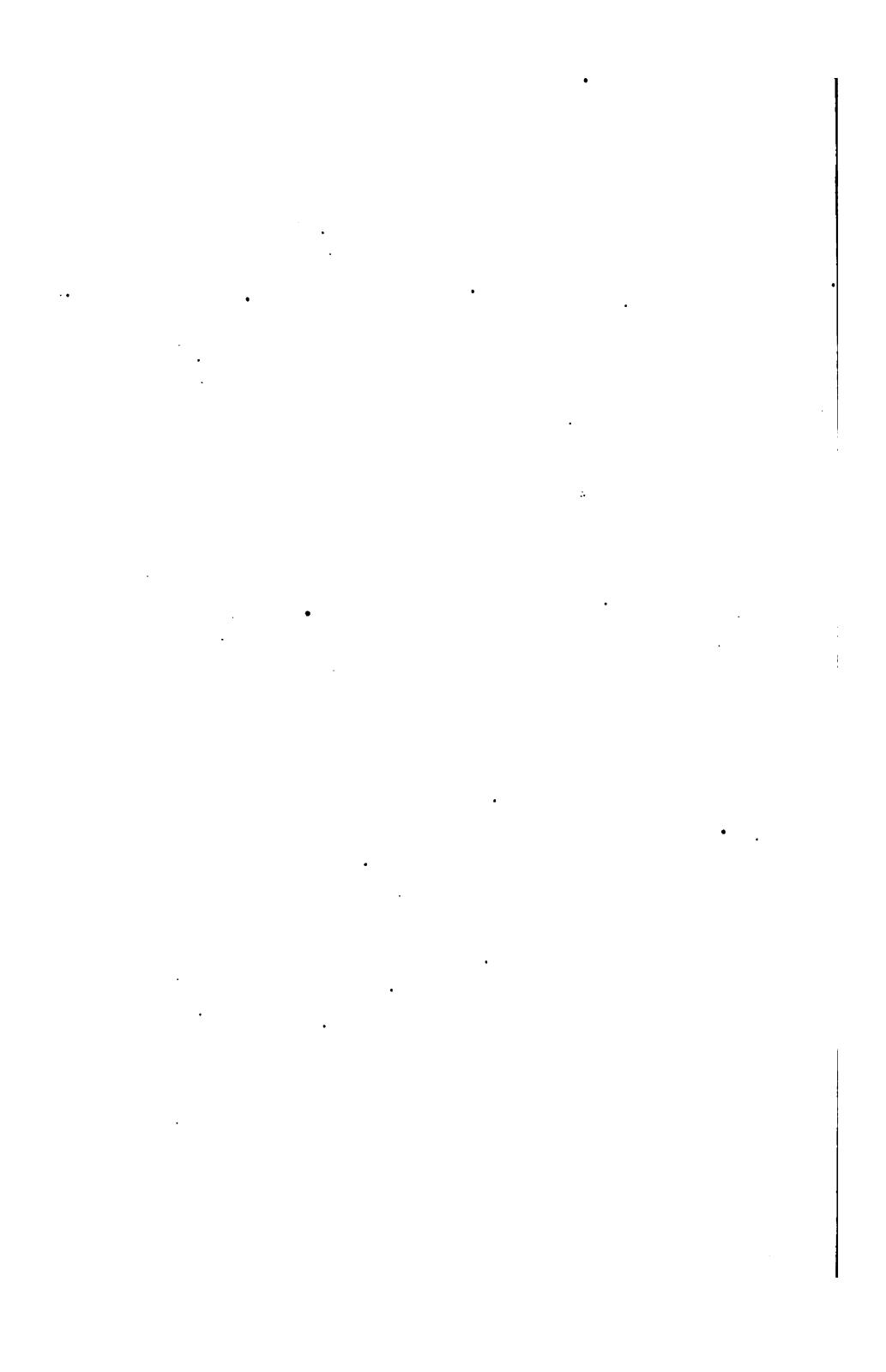
HARLEQUIN AND Co. . . . .	PAGE 276
---------------------------	-------------

CHAPTER XVI.

“Goose” . . . . .	295
-------------------	-----

CHAPTER XVII.

EPILOGUES . . . . .	314
---------------------	-----



# A BOOK OF THE PLAY.

---

## CHAPTER I.

### “HALF-PRICE AT NINE O'CLOCK.”

THE plan of admitting the public to the theatres at “half-price,” after the conclusion of a certain portion of the entertainments of the evening, has, of late years, gone out of fashion. Half-price was an institution of old date, however, and by no means without advantage to the playgoer.

Formerly, the prices of admission to the theatres were not fixed so definitely as at present. In Colley Cibber's time it was held to be reasonable that the prices should be raised whenever a new play was produced, on account of which any great expense in the way of scenery, dresses, and decorations had been incurred, or when pantomimes were brought out, involving an outlay of a thousand pounds or so. After the bloom had a little worn off these novelties, the prices fell again

to their old standard ; consisting for some years of four shillings, two shillings and six-pence, eighteenpence, and one shilling.

In November, 1744, when Mr. Fleetwood was manager of Drury Lane, he was charged by the public with raising his charges too capriciously, without the excuse of having presented his patrons with a new or a costly entertainment. Thereupon ensued a disturbance in the theatre, and Mr. Fleetwood was required by the audience to give an immediate explanation of his conduct. The manager pleaded that not being an actor he was exempt from the necessity of appearing on the stage publicly before the audience ; but he gave notice, through one of his players, that he was willing to confer with any persons who might be deputed to meet him in his own room. A deputation accordingly went from the pit to confer with the manager, and the house waited patiently their return. The result of the consultation was stated in a note to the playbill of the following day (Saturday) :

“ Whenever a pantomime or farce shall be advertised, the advanced prices shall be returned to those who do not choose to stay ; and, on Thursday next, will be published the manager’s reasons for his conduct in the present dispute.”

This arrangement was very far from giving satisfaction, however, and the disturbance was renewed the next night. A country gentleman, who had distinguished himself by the

warmth and violence of his expressions of disapproval, was forcibly removed by the constables from the upper boxes and carried before a magistrate, who, however, it would seem, declined to entertain the charge against the offender. The theatre was closed for two or three nights, and a notice appeared in the play-bills : "The great damage occasioned by the disturbances makes it impossible to perform." The manager published an address to the public in the *General Advertiser* setting forth a statement of the case and justifying his conduct.

He reminded the public that the extraordinary disturbances which had lately occurred greatly affected their diversions as well as his property. He apprehended that the reasons of complaint assigned were, "the exhibition of pantomimes, advanced prices, and insults on the audience." As to the first charge, he submitted that however distasteful pantomimes might be to the delicacy of some judgments, yet they were suited to the taste of many others ; and as the play-house might be considered as the general mart of pleasure, it was only from the variety of entertainment the different desires of the public could be supplied. He urged that the receipts of the house were sufficient evidence that without the occasional performance of pantomimes he could not afford to produce plays of a higher class. With regard to the advance in the prices, he hoped he should

be thought justified in that measure, when the great increase in his expenses was considered. Further, he conceived he should be no longer the subject of the displeasure of the public, since he had complied with the demand that the advanced prices should be returned to those who quitted the theatre after the first piece, without waiting to see the pantomime. He denied that he had ever had any intention to insult the audience. The arrest of the gentleman in the upper boxes was not in consequence of his orders, nor was he in any way acquainted with the fact until after the discharge of the prisoner. There had been a quarrel in the theatre and much confusion consequent upon some persons flinging the candles and sconces on the stage. He denied that he had employed "bruisers" to coerce the audience. The peace-officers, carpenters, and scene-men (which last, on account of the pantomime, were very numerous), and other servants of the theatre, had not appeared until the tumult was at its height. The benches were being torn up, and there were threats of storming the stage and demolishing the scenes. If any "bruisers" were in the pit, the manager presumed that they must have entered the house with the multitude who came in after the door-keepers had been driven from their posts. Finally, he appealed to the public to pronounce whether after the concession he had made, and the injury he had sustained, to the extent of

several hundred pounds, they would persist in a course which would only deprive them of their diversions, the players of subsistence, and compel him to resign his property.

This appeal had its effect: the disturbance ceased: although there was some discontent that an arrangement so profitable to the manager had been agreed to. It was found that in practice, when people were once comfortably seated, "very few ever went out to demand their advanced money; and those few very soon grew tired of doing so; until at last it settled in the quiet payment of the advanced prices." Mr. Fleetwood, however, did not long continue in the management.

In the year 1762 there occurred another disturbance in connection with the half-price question. An adaptation of Shakespeare's "Two Gentlemen of Verona," by Mr. Benjamin Victor, had been produced at Drury Lane Theatre. It was played five nights with success, but, on the sixth, when, according to the old theatrical custom, the receipts went to the author of the adaptation, the performance was interrupted. "A set of young men," writes Mr. Victor, "who called themselves 'The Town,' had consulted together and determined to compel the manager to admit them at the end of the third act at half-price to every performance except in the run of a new pantomime; and they chose to make that demand on the sixth night of 'The Two

Gentlemen of Verona,' though it was printed on the playbills 'for the benefit of the author of the alterations.' " The performance of the play was actually forbidden. One Mr. Fitzpatrick, who was the avowed ringleader of the reformers, harangued the audience from the boxes, and set forth in very warm language the impositions of the managers, vehemently pleading the right of the public to fix the price of their bill of fare. Garrick came forward to address the house, but was received with a storm of disapprobation, and refused a hearing. The uproar continued; the benches were torn up, and the lustres and girandoles broken. Ultimately, the money taken at the doors was returned to the audience, and the theatre cleared.

On the following night, Mr. Mallet's tragedy of "Elvira" was played for the first time. The disturbance was renewed, and Mr. Garrick was called for. He was asked peremptorily, "Will you or will you not give admittance for half-price after the third act of a play, except during the first winter a pantomime is performed?" The manager, dreading a repetition of the riot of the preceding evening, replied in the affirmative. A demand was then made for an apology from Moody the actor, who had interfered to prevent the theatre being fired. Moody appeared, and, after an Irish fashion, expressed regret that he had displeased the audience "by saving

their lives in putting out the fire.” This pleasantry was very ill received. Mr. Fitzpatrick’s party insisted that the actor should go down on his knees and implore their pardon. Moody refused with an oath, and abruptly quitted the stage. He was received with open arms by Garrick in the wings, who assured him he should not suffer for his spirited conduct. But the tumult in the theatre became so great, that the manager was compelled to promise that Moody should not appear on the stage while he was under the displeasure of the public. A reconciliation was some time afterwards brought about between the actor and his audience. It may be noted that in 1763, according to a manuscript memorandum in his own hand (discovered by Mr. Parkes) Sir Phillip Francis, the supposed “Junius,” commenced to write anonymously for the Press, the occasion being “a row in a theatre, to help Fitzpatrick out of the scrape.”

Mr. Fitzpatrick’s plan of reform was supposed to be chiefly levelled at Mr. Garrick, yet it became evident that the management of the rival theatre must be made to accept the regulations that had been imposed on Drury Lane. With this view the rioters paid a visit to Covent Garden, where the opera of “Artaxerxes” was being represented. Mr. Fitzpatrick delivered his inflammatory speech from the boxes, and insisted upon immediate com-

pliance with the demands of his party. Mr. Beard, the manager, replied with great firmness. He stated that operas had never been performed at such low prices as at his theatre ; that his expenses were very great ; and, he urged, that the public should not grudge the full price of admission, seeing that no expense in the way of actors, dresses, scenery, music, and decorations of all kinds, had been spared for their entertainment. Finally, he declined to accept the tariff of admission proposed by Mr. Fitzpatrick. A riot then ensued, and so much damage was done that the carpenters were employed for four or five days in repairing the theatre. Mr. Beard, however, by means of a chief justice's warrant, brought two or three of the rioters before Lord Mansfield. His lordship solemnly cautioned Mr. Fitzpatrick that if any loss of life were to occur in consequence of the breach of the peace he had instigated, the law would hold him accountable for the disaster. This somewhat checked the violence of the rioters, who contented themselves thenceforward with laughing and hissing, and forebore to inflict injury upon the furniture and fittings of the theatre. Mr. Beard, at last, finding it impossible to keep open the doors of his theatre to any purpose, submitted to the terms of the dictators ; peace was restored, and half-price established.

The exception made in favour of new pan-

tomimes was much remarked upon at the time. It was declared that the effect of the arrangement would be to exalt a worthless class of entertainment at the expense of tragedy and comedy ; in order to obtain full prices the managers would be encouraged to produce a succession of pantomimes, to the neglect of works of real dramatic worth. Further, it was declared that the proceedings of Mr. Fitzpatrick, though professedly in the interests of the public, were, in truth, due to motives of private resentment and malice. According to Davies, in his "Life of Garrick," there would seem to be much reason for this charge. Mr. Fitzpatrick was a gentleman of moderate fortune, constantly attending the theatres, frequenting the coffee-houses about Covent Garden, and dabbling in dramatic criticism. He had been introduced to Garrick, had been received with much favour by the great actor, and placed on the free list of Drury Lane. His success somewhat turned his brain. He began to conceive himself a person of great importance. He assumed severely critical airs, and published letters in "The Craftsman," dealing with the players, and especially with Garrick, after a very arrogant and acrimonious fashion. Garrick took up his pen to reply, and in his poem "The Fribbleriad"—the hero of which is named Fizgigg—he rather severely satirised his critic. Churchill, following suit, to the eighth edition

of his "Rosciad" added fifty lines, scourging Mr. Fitzpatrick savagely enough. The "half-price" disturbance was the method of replying to these attacks of the actor and his friend, which Mr. Fitzpatrick found to be the most suitable and convenient. Arthur Murphy, however, says for Mr. Fitzpatrick, that he was admired for his talents and amiable manners, and that Churchill caricatured him in the "Rosciad" to gratify the resentment of Garrick. In any case, however, it would be hard to justify the riot of which Fitzpatrick was certainly the instigator.

In 1817, the experiment was tried at the English Opera House, or Lyceum Theatre, of giving two distinct performances in the evening, in lieu of taking half-price at nine o'clock. The management alleged that objection had been taken to the length of theatrical performances, which were often made to extend over five hours; that the half-price system did not remedy the evil complained of by those whose habits of life or avocations would not permit their early attendance at the theatre. "Many persons who would be desirous to witness the early part of a performance, are indisposed to pay the price of a whole evening's entertainment, for that portion of it only which they can enjoy; and it may reasonably be supposed that thousands who might wish to enter the theatre at a later hour (as at the usual time for second price), are wholly ex-

cluded by the certainty of finding the best seats occupied. Thus numberless persons, from the one or the other cause, are deterred from frequenting the amusements of the stage." In order, therefore, to accommodate the patrons who required the performances to commence at an early hour, and to gratify those who demanded that the entertainments should be continued until late, it was proposed to divide every evening's entertainment into two distinct parts or performances. Each performance was to consist of a full three-act opera ; or of a short opera with a ballet or musical entertainment. The first performance was to begin at six o'clock, and to last till about nine ; and the second performance was to begin at half-past nine, and to conclude at twelve ; the prices to either performance being considerably reduced. "We are fully aware," said the public address of the management, "that we shall have to encounter many professional jokes on this occasion, but we are prepared to smile at the good-humoured raillery of our friends, and the hostile attempts of our enemies, who may both, perhaps, be inclined to call this a 'Bartholomew Fair scheme.' Let them call it what they will, we know that our sole aim is to exist by your favour, and by devising all means for your entertainment, till we ultimately receive an honest reward for our labours."

The new plan was not found to work very

well, however. A very thin audience attended the first performance, and a few hisses were heard in opposition to the project ; the friends of the management applauding lustily. At the conclusion of the first entertainment, certain obstinate persons refused to resign their seats and make way for their successors, though the stage-lamps were extinguished and they were threatened with total darkness. The manager then came forward, and formally announced that the first performance had concluded. One or two then threw their money on the stage, as the price of their admission to the second performance, and, finding that the malcontents were resolved to keep their seats, the manager submitted and retired. The plan was only continued for ten nights, when the theatre was closed for the season. In a farewell address, the manager stated that the experiment, so far as he could judge, had succeeded ; during the ten nights, compared with the ten nights preceding, an addition of one-third having been made to the number of persons visiting the theatre. Still, he did not feel justified in pledging himself to continue the arrangement in future seasons. There was indeed no further trial of the double performance system in lieu of half-price.

It is rather curious to find the plan of half-price having any sort of effect upon dramatic literature, yet we find in the "Autobiography of Thomas Dibdin," 1827, the following ad-

vice given him by Lewis, the stage-manager at Covent Garden, in regard to writing for the stage, and apropos of Mr. Dibdin's comedy, called "Liberal Opinions."

"MY DEAR TOM,—This will be your first five-act production, and don't be offended if an old practitioner ventures to offer (from the respect he bears you) the fruits of his long experience. Half-price is a very proper privilege for those whose time or pockets do not afford them an opportunity of visiting the theatre earlier; but it is often the bane of an author on the first night of a five-act play. The new-comers know nothing of the foregone part of the drama; and having no context with which to connect allusions in the fourth and fifth acts, are apt to damn without consideration that which they are no judges of—

And what they cannot comprehend deny.

"To be fore-armed against this contingency, contrive to make some character (either in the heat of passion, or in any way you please) briefly run over all the foregoing parts of the story so as to put every one in possession of what they otherwise would have lost by absence; and, take my word, you will reap the benefit of it."

Mr. Dibdin expresses so much gratitude for Mr. Lewis's counsel, and recommends it so earnestly to the consideration of all young dramatists, that we cannot doubt that some

---

effect upon subsequent writings for the stage must in this indirect way have arisen out of the half-price system, and in avoidance of its disadvantages as set forth by the stage-manager of Covent Garden Theatre.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE DRAMA UNDER DIFFICULTIES.

FOR such a triumph as fanaticism enjoyed over the fine arts in England during and for some time after the great Civil War, no parallel can be found in the history of any other nation. And it was not, be it remembered, the work of a capricious and cruel despot ; it was the tyranny of a solemn legislative assembly. Hypocrisy had some share in the proceeding, very likely ; but in the main the Puritanism of the time was sincere even to its frenzies of intolerance. Good men and true held that they were doing only what was sound, and wise, and right, when they made ruthless war upon poetry, and painting, and all the refinements and graces of life, denouncing them as scandals and sins, ungodly devices, pernicious wiles of the author of all evil ; when they peremptorily closed the doors of the theatres, and dismissed actors, authors, managers, and all concerned to absolute starvation.

In the England of that time, no doubt, Puritanism obtained supporters out of respect for superior power; just as in France, at a later date, Republicanism gained converts by means of terror. The prudent, when conflict and tumult are at hand, will usually side with the stronger combatant. Thus it was with little resistance that there passed through both Houses of Parliament, in 1647, the ordinance by virtue of which the theatres were to be dismantled and suppressed; all actors of plays to be publicly whipped; and all spectators and playgoers, for every offence, condemned to forfeit five shillings. This was the *coup de grâce*; for the stage had already undergone many and severe assaults. The player's tenure of his art had become more and more precarious, until acting seemed to be as a service of danger. The ordinance of 1647 closed the theatres for nearly fourteen years; but for some sixteen years before the stage had been in a more or less depressed condition. Scarcely any new dramatists of distinction had appeared after 1630. The theatres were considerably reduced in number by the time 1636 was arrived at. Then came arbitrary closing of the playhouses—professedly but for a season. Thus in 1636 they were closed for ten months; in 1642 for eighteen months. In truth, Puritanism carried on its victorious campaign against the drama for something like thirty years; while even at an earlier date there had

been certain skirmishing attacks upon the stage. With the first Puritan began the quarrel with the players. As Isaac Disraeli has observed, "we must go back to the reign of Elizabeth to comprehend an event which occurred in that of Charles I." A sanctimonious sect urged extravagant reforms—at first, perhaps, in all simplicity—founding their opinions upon cramped and literal interpretations of divine precepts, and forming views of human nature "more practicable in a desert than a city, and rather suited to a monastic order than to a polished people." Still, these fanatics could scarcely have dreamed that power would ever be given them to carry their peculiar theories into practice, and to govern a nation as though it were composed entirely of precisians and bigots. For two generations—from the Reformation to the Civil War—the Puritans had been the butt of the satirical, the jest of the wits—ridiculed and laughed at on all sides. Then came a time, "when," in the words of Macaulay, "the laughers began to look grave in their turn. The rigid, ungainly zealots . . . . rose up in arms, conquered, ruled, and, grimly smiling, trod down under their feet the whole crowd of mockers."

Yet from the first the Puritans had not neglected the pen as a weapon of offence. In 1579 Stephen Gosson published his curious pamphlet bearing the lengthy title of "The Schoole of Abuse, containing a pleasant Invec-

tive against Poets, Pipers, Jesters, and such like Catterpillars of a Commonwealth ; setting up the Flag of Defiance to their mischievous exercise, and overthrowing their Bulwarks, by Profane Writers, natural reason, and common experience : A Discourse as pleasant for gentlemen that favour learning as profitable for all that will follow virtue." Gossōn expresses himself with much quaint force, but he is not absolutely intolerant. He was a student of Oxford University, had in his youth written poems and plays, and even appeared upon the scene as an actor. Although he had repented of these follies, he still viewed them without acrimony. To his pamphlet we are indebted for certain interesting details in regard to the manners and customs of the Elizabethan playgoers. A further attack upon the theatre was led by Dr. Reynolds, of Queen's College, who was greatly troubled by the performance of a play at Christchurch, and who published, in 1593, "The Overthrow of Stage Plays," described by Disraeli as "a tedious invective, foaming at the mouth of its text with quotations and authorities." Reynolds was especially severe upon "the sin of boys wearing the dress and affecting the airs of women ;" and thus unconsciously helped on a change he would have regarded as still more deplorable—the appearance of actresses upon the stage. But a fiercer far than Reynolds was to arise. In 1633 Prynne produced his "Histriomastix ;

or, *The Player's Scourge*," a monstrous work of more than a thousand closely-printed quarto pages, devoted to the most searching indictment of the stage and its votaries. The author has been described as a man of great learning, but little judgment; of sour and austere principles, but wholly deficient in candour. His book was judged libellous, for he had unwittingly aspersed the Queen in his attack upon the masques performed at Court. He was cited in the Star Chamber, and sentenced to stand in the pillory, to lose both ears, to pay a heavy fine, and to undergo imprisonment for life. This severe punishment probably stimulated the Puritans, when opportunity came to them, to deal mercilessly with the actors by way of avenging Prynne's wrongs, or of expressing sympathy with his sufferings.

And it is to be noted that early legislation in regard to the players had been far from lenient. For such actors as had obtained the countenance of "any Baron of this Realme," or "any other honourable personage of greater degree," exception was to be made; otherwise, all common players in interludes, all fencers, bearwards, and minstrels were declared by an Act passed in the 14th year of Elizabeth to be rogues and vagabonds, and, whether male or female, liable on a first conviction "to be grievously whipped and burned through the gristle of the right ear with an hot iron of the compass of an inch about, manifesting his or

her roguish kind of life ; " a second offence was adjudged to be felony ; a third entailed death without benefit of clergy or privilege of sanctuary. Meanwhile, the regular companies of players to whom this harsh act did not apply, were not left unmolested. The Court might encourage them, but the City would have none of them. They had long been accustomed to perform in the yards of the City inns, but an order of the Common Council, dated December, 1575, expelled the players from the City. Thereupon public playhouses were erected outside the " liberties " or boundaries of the City. The first was probably the theatre in Shoreditch; the second, opened in its immediate neighbourhood, was known as the Curtain ; the third, built by John Burbadge and other of the Earl of Leicester's company of players, was the famous Blackfriars Theatre. These were all erected about 1576, and other playhouses were opened soon afterwards. Probably to avoid the penalties of the Act of Elizabeth, all strolling and unattached players made haste to join regular companies, or to shelter themselves under noble patronage. And now the Church raised its voice, and a controversy which still possesses some vitality touching the morality or immorality of playhouses, plays, and players, was fairly and formally entered upon. A sermon preached at Paul's Cross, November, 1577, " in the time of the plague," by the Rev. T. Wilcocks,

denounced in strong language the “common plays” in London, and the multitude that flocked to them and followed them, and described “the sumptuous theatre houses” as a continual monument of London’s prodigality and folly. Performances, it seems, had for a while been forbidden because of the plague. “I like the policy well if it hold still,” said the preacher; “for a disease is but bodged and patched up that is not cured in the cause, and the cause of plagues is sin, if you look to it well; and the cause of sin are playes; therefore, the cause of plagues are playes.” It is clear, too, that the clergy had become affected by a certain jealousy of the players, the sound of whose trumpet attracted more attention than the ringing of the church-bells, and brought together a larger audience. John Stockwood, schoolmaster of Tunbridge, who preached at Paul’s Cross on St. Bartholomew’s Day, 1578, demanded, “will not a filthy play, with the blast of a trumpet, sooner call thither a thousand than an hour’s toiling bring to the sermon a hundred?” It was, moreover, an especial grievance to the devout at this period that plays were represented on a Sunday, the church and the theatre being thus brought into positive rivalry and antagonism. The clergy saw with dismay that their own congregations were thin and listless, while crowded and excited audiences rewarded the exertions of the players. Mr. Stockwood, declining to

discuss whether plays were or not wholly unlawful, yet protested with good reason that in a Christian commonwealth they were intolerable on the seventh day, and exclaimed against the “horrible profanity” and “devilish inventions” of the lords of misrule, morrice, and May-day dancers, whom he accused of tripping about the church, even during the hours of service, and of figuring in costumes which, by their texture and scantiness, outraged ordinary notions of decency.

But notwithstanding this old-established opposition to the theatres on the part of both Churchmen and Puritans, and the severe oppression of the players by the authorities, it is yet indisputable that the English were essentially a playgoing people; proud, as well they might be, of the fact that they possessed the finest drama and the best actors in the world. And, allowing for the license and grossness which the times permitted if they did not encourage, and a certain liberty of speech and action allowed time out of mind to the clowns of the stage, the drama suppressed by the Puritans was of sound and wholesome constitution, rich in poetry of the noblest class. It is sufficient to say, indeed, that it was the drama of Shakespeare and his contemporaries. To a very large class, therefore, the persecution of the players and the suppression of the stage must have been grave misfortune and real privation. To many the theatre still

supplied not merely recreation but education and enlightenment as well. That there was any rising of the public on behalf of the players does not appear. Puritanism was too strong for opposition ; and besides, the play-goer, by the nature of his favourite pursuit, almost avows himself a man of peace and obedient to the law. The public had to submit, as best it could, to the tyranny of fanaticism. But that bitter mortification was felt by very many may be taken for granted.

The authors were deprived of occupation so far as concerned the stage ; they sought other employment for their pens ; printing a play, however, now and then, by way of keeping their hands in as dramatists. The managers, left with nothing to manage, perhaps turned to trade in quest of outlet for their energies—the manager has been always something of the trader. But for the actors, forbidden to act, what were they to do ? They had been constituted Malignants or Royalists almost by Act of Parliament. The younger players promptly joined the army of King Charles. Mohun acquired the rank of captain, and at the close of the war, served in Flanders, receiving the pay of a major. Hart became a lieutenant of horse, under Sir Thomas Dallison, in the regiment of Prince Rupert. In the same troop served Burt as cornet, and Shatterel as quartermaster. Allen, of the Cockpit, was a major and quartermaster-general at Oxford. Robin-

son, serving on the side of the king, was long reputed to have lost his life at the taking of Basing House. The story went that the Cromwellian General Harrison had, with his own hands, slain the actor, crying, as he struck him down : "Cursed is he that doeth the work of the Lord negligently." Chalmers maintains, however, that an entry in the parish register of St. Anne's, Blackfriars, of the death and burial of "Richard Robinson, a player," in March, 1647, negatives this account of the actor's fate. Possibly there were two actors bearing the not uncommon name of Robinson. These were all players of note, who had acquitted themselves with applause in the best plays of the time. Of certain older actors, unable to bear arms for the king, Lowin turned innkeeper, and died, at an advanced age, landlord of the Three Pigeons at Brentford. He had been an actor of eminence in the reign of James I. ; "and his poverty was as great as his age," says one account of him. Taylor, who was reputed to have been taught by Shakespeare himself the correct method of interpreting the part of Hamlet, died and was buried at Richmond. These two actors, as did others probably, sought to pick up a little money by publishing copies of plays that had obtained favour in performance, but had not before been printed. Thus, in 1652, Beaumont and Fletcher's "Wild Goose Chase" was printed in folio, "for the public use of all.

the ingenious, and the private benefit of John Lowin and Joseph Taylor, servants to his late Majesty, and by them dedicated to the honoured few lovers of dramatic poesy : wherein they modestly intimate their wants, and that with sufficient cause, for whatever they were before the wars, they were afterwards reduced to a necessitous condition." Pollard, possessed of some means, withdrew to his relatives in the country, and there ended his days peacefully. Perkins and Sumner lodged humbly together in Clerkenwell, and were interred in that parish. None of these unfortunate old actors lived to see the re-opening of the theatres or the restoration of the monarchy.

But one actor is known to have sided with the Parliament and against the King. He renounced the stage and took up the trade of a jeweller in Aldermanbury. This was Swanston, who had played Othello, and been described as "a brave, roaring fellow, who would make the house shake again." "One wretched actor only," Mr. Gifford writes, in the introduction to his edition of Massinger, "deserted his sovereign." But it may be questioned whether Swanston really merited this reprobation. He was a Presbyterian, it seems, and remained true to his political opinions, even though these now involved the abandonment of his profession. If his brother players fought for the King, they fought no less for themselves, and for the theatre the Puritans had suppressed.

Nor is the contrast Mr. Gifford draws, between the conduct of our actors at the time of the Civil War, and the proceedings of the French players during the first French revolution, altogether fair. As Isaac Disraeli has pointed out, there was no question of suppressing the stage in France—it was rather employed as an instrument in aid of the Revolution. The actors may have sympathised sincerely with the royal family in their afflicted state, but it was hardly to be expected that men would abandon, on that account, the profession of their choice, in which they had won real distinction, and which seemed to flourish the more owing to the excited condition of France. The French revolution, in truth, brought to the stage great increase of national patronage.

The Civil War concluded, and the cause of King Charles wholly lost, the actors were at their wits' end to earn bread. Certain of them resolved to defy the law, and to give theatrical performances in spite of the Parliament. Out of the wreck of the companies of the different theatres they made up a tolerable troop, and ventured to present some few plays, with as much caution and privacy as possible, at the Cockpit, in Drury Lane. This was in the winter of 1648. Doubtless there were many to whom the stage was dear, who were willing enough to encourage the poor players. Play-going had now become as a vice or a misdemeanour, to be prosecuted in secret—like

dram-drinking. The Cockpit representations lasted but a few days. During a performance of Fletcher's tragedy of "Rollo, Duke of Normandy," in which such excellent actors as Lowin, Taylor, Pollard, Burt, and Hart were concerned, a party of troopers beset the house, broke in about the middle of the play, and carried off the players, accoutred as they were in their stage dresses, to Hatton House, then a prison, where, after being detained some time, they were plundered of their clothes and dismissed. "Afterwards, in Oliver's time," as an old chronicler of dramatic events has left upon record, "they used to act privately, three or four miles or more out of town, now here, now there, sometimes in noblemen's houses—in particular Holland House, at Kensington—where the nobility and gentry who met (but in no great numbers) used to make a sum for them, each giving a broad-piece or the like." The widow of the Earl of Holland, who was beheaded in March, 1649, occupied Holland House at this time. She was the granddaughter of Sir Walter Cope, and a stout-hearted lady, who doubtless took pride in encouraging the entertainments her late lord's foes had tried so hard to suppress. Alexander Goffe, "the woman-actor at Blackfriars," acted as "Jackal" on the occasion of these furtive performances. He had made himself known to the persons of quality who patronised plays, and gave them notice of the time when

---

and the place where the next representation would "come off." A stage-play, indeed, in those days was much what a prize-fight has been in later times—absolutely illegal, and yet assured of many persistent supporters. Gosse was probably a slim, innocent-looking youth, who was enabled to baffle the vigilance of the Puritan functionaries, and to pass freely and unsuspected between the players and their patrons. At Christmas-time and during the few days devoted to Bartholomew Fair, the actors, by dint of bribing the officer in command of the guard at Whitehall, and securing in such wise his connivance, were enabled to present performances at the Red Bull in St. John Street. Sometimes the Puritan troopers were mean enough to accept the hard-earned money of these poor players, and, nevertheless, to interrupt their performance, carrying them off to be imprisoned and punished for their breach of the law. But their great trouble arose from the frequent seizure of their wardrobe by the covetous soldiers. The clothes worn by the players upon the stage were of superior quality—fine dresses were of especial value in times prior to the introduction of scenery—and the loss was hard to bear. The public, it was feared, would be loath to believe in the merits of an actor who was no better attired than themselves. But at length it became too hazardous, as Kirkman relates, in the preface to "The Wits, or Sport upon

Sport," 1672, "to act anything that required any good cloaths; instead of which painted cloath many times served the turn to represent rich habits." Kirkman's book is a collection of certain "scenes or parts of plays . . . . the fittest for the actors to represent at this period, there being little cost in the cloaths, which often then were in great danger to be seized by the soldiers." These "select pieces of drollery, digested into scenes by way of dialogue, together with variety of humours of several nations, fitted for the pleasure and content of all persons, either in court, city, county, or camp," were first printed in 1662, by H. Marsh, and were originally contrived by Robert Cox, a comic genius in his way, who exhibited great ingenuity in evading the ordinances of Parliament and in carrying on dramatic performances in spite of the Puritans. He presented at the Red Bull what were professedly entertainments of rope-dancing, gymnastic feats, and such coarse, practical fun as may even now be seen in the circus of strolling equestrian companies; but with these he cunningly intermingled select scenes from the comedies of the best English dramatists. From Kirkman's book, which is now highly prized from its rarity, it appears that the "drollery" entitled "The Bouncing Knight, or the Robbers Robbed," is, in truth, a famous adventure of Sir John Falstaff's, set forth in close accordance with the original

text ; while the comedy of “ Rule a Wife and have a Wife ” is reduced to a brief entertainment called “ The Equal Match.” Other popular plays are similarly dealt with. But Cox, it seems, invented not less than he borrowed. Upon the foundation of certain old-established farces, he raised up entertainments something of the nature of the extemporary comedy of Italy : characters being devised or developed expressly with a view to his own performance of them. “ All we could divert ourselves with,” writes Kirkman, “ were these humours and pieces of plays, which, passing under the name of a merry conceited fellow called Bottom the Weaver, Simpleton the Smith, John Swabber, or some such title, were only allowed us, and that by stealth too . . . . and these small things were as profitable and as great get-pennies to the actors, as any of our late famed plays.” He relates, moreover, that these performances attracted “ a great confluence of auditors,” insomuch that the Red Bull, a play-house of large size, was often so full, that “ as many went back for want of room as had entered ;” and that meanly as these “ drolls ” might be thought of in later times, they were acted by the best comedians “ then and now in being.” Especially he applauds the actor, author, and contriver of the majority of the farces—“ the incomparable Robert Cox.” Isaac Disraeli gives him credit for preserving alive,

as it were by stealth, the suppressed spirit of the drama. That he was a very natural actor, or what would now be called "realistic," may be judged from the story told of his performance of a comic blacksmith, and his securing thereby an invitation to work at the forge of a master-smith, who had been present among the audience. "Although your father speaks so ill of you," said the employer of labour, "if you will come and work with me, I will give you twelvepence a week more than I give any other journeyman." As Kirkman adds: "Thus was he taken for a smith bred, that was, indeed, as much of any trade."

It seems certain that for some few years prior to the Restoration there had been far less stringent treatment of the players than in the earlier days of the triumph of Puritanism. Cromwell, perhaps, rather despised the stage than condemned it seriously on religious grounds; the while he did not object to indulge in buffoonery and horseplay, even in the gallery of Whitehall. Some love of music he has been credited with, and this, perhaps, induced him to tolerate the operatic dramas of Sir William Davenant, which obtained representation during the Commonwealth: such as "The History of Sir Francis Drake," "represented by instrumental and vocal music, and by art of Perspective in Scenes," and "The Cruelty of the Spaniards in Peru." According to Langbaine, the two plays called "The Siege of

Rhodes" were likewise acted "*in stilo recitativo*" during the time of the Civil Wars, and upon the Restoration were rewritten and enlarged for regular performance at the Duke of York's Theatre, in Lincoln's Inn Fields. It seems to have been held that a play was no longer a play if its words were sung instead of spoken—or these representations of Davenant's works may have been altogether stealthy, and without the cognisance of the legal authorities of the time. Isaac Disraeli, however, has pointed out that in some verses, published in 1653, and prefixed to the plays of Richard Brome, there is evident a tone of exultation at the passing away of power from the hands of those who had oppressed the actors. The poet, in a moralising vein, alludes to the fate of the players as it was affected by the dissolution of the Long Parliament :

See the strange twirl of times ! When such poor things  
Outlive the dates of parliaments or kings !  
This revolution makes exploded wit  
Now see the fall of those that ruined it ;  
And the condemned stage hath now obtained  
To see her executioners arraigned.  
There's nothing permanent ; those high great men  
That rose from dust to dust may fall again ;  
And fate so orders things that the same hour  
Sees the same man both in contempt and power !

For complete emancipation, however, the stage had to wait some years ; until, indeed, it pleased Monk, acting in accordance with the desire of the nation, to march his army to London, and to restore the monarchy. En-

camped in Hyde Park, Monk was visited by one Rhodes, a bookseller, who had been formerly occupied as wardrobe-keeper to King Charles I.'s company of comedians in Blackfriars, and who now applied to the general for permission to reopen the Cockpit in Drury-lane as a playhouse. Monk, it seems, held histrionic art in some esteem ; at any rate the City companies, when with his council of state he dined in their halls, were wont to entertain him with performances of a theatrical kind : satirical farces, dancing and singing, "many shapes and ghosts, and the like ; and all to please His Excellency the Lord General," say the newspapers of the time. Rhodes obtained the boon he sought, and promptly engaging a troop of actors, reopened the Cockpit. His chief actor was his apprentice, Thomas Betterton, the son of Charles I.'s cook. For some fifty years the great Mr. Betterton held his place upon the stage, and upon his death was interred with something like royal honours in Westminster Abbey.

Of the fate of Rhodes nothing further is recorded. He was the first to give back to Londoners a theatre they might visit legally and safely ; and that done, he is heard of no more. Killigrew and Davenant were soon invested with patent rights, and entitled to a monopoly of theatrical management in London ; probably they prospered by displacing Rhodes —but so much cannot be positively asserted.

The drama was now out of its difficulties. Yet the influence and effect of these did not soon abate. Upon them followed indeed a sort of after-crop of troubles, seriously injurious to the stage. The Cavaliers engendered a drama that was other than the drama the Puritans had destroyed. The theatre was restored, it is true, but with an altered constitution. It was not only that the old race of poets and dramatists had died out, and that writing for the stage was as a new profession, almost as a lost art. Taste had altered. As Evelyn regretfully notes in 1662, after witnessing a performance of *Hamlet*—to which, perhaps, the audience paid little heed, although the incomparable Betterton appeared in the tragedy—“but now the old plays begin to disgust this refined age, since his Majesty’s being so long abroad.” Shakespeare and his brother bards were out of fashion. There was a demand for tragedies of the French school—with rhyming lines and artificial sentiment—for comedies of intrigue and equivoque, after a foreign pattern, in lieu of our old English plays of wit, humour, and character. Plagiarism, translation, and adaptation took up a secure position on the stage. The leading playwrights of the Restoration—Dryden, Shadwell, Durfey, Wycherley—all borrowed freely from the French. Dryden frankly apologised—he was required to produce so many plays all could not be of his own inventing. The King encouraged appropriation

of foreign works. He drew Sir Samuel Tuke's attention to an admired Spanish comedy, advising its adaptation to the English stage : the result was "The Adventures of Five Hours," a work very highly esteemed by Mr. Pepys. The introduction of scenery was due in a great measure to French example, although "paintings in perspective," had already been seen in an English theatre. But now scenery was imperatively necessary to a dramatic performance, and a sort of passion arose for mechanical devices and decorative appliances of a novel kind. Dryden was no reformer—in truth, to suit his own purposes, he pandered laboriously to the follies and caprices of his patrons ; nevertheless, he was fully sensible of the errors of the time, and often chronicles these in his prologues and epilogues. He writes :

True wit has run its best days long ago,  
It ne'er looked up since we were lost in show,  
When sense in doggrel rhymes and clouds was lost,  
And dulness flourished at the actor's cost.  
Nor stopped it here ; when tragedy was done,  
Satire and humour the same fate have run,  
And comedy is sunk to trick and pun.

\*     \*     \*     \*

Let them who the rebellion first begun  
To wit, restore the monarch if they can ;  
Our author dares not be the first bold man.

And upon another occasion :

But when all failed to strike the stage quite dumb,  
Those wicked engines, called machines, are come.  
Thunder and lightning now for wit are played,  
And shortly scenes in Lapland will be laid.

\*     \*     \*     \*

Fletcher's despised, your Jonson out of fashion,  
And wit the only drug in all the nation.

Actresses, too, were introduced upon the stage in pursuance of continental example. But for these there was really great necessity. The boys who, prior to the Civil War, had personated the heroines of the drama, were now too mature, both in years and aspect, for such an occupation.

Doubting we should never play agen,  
We have played all our women into men!

says the prologue, introducing the first actress. Hart and Mohun, Clun, Shatterel and Burt, who were now leading actors, had been boy-actresses before the closing of the theatres. And even after the Restoration, Mohun, whose military title of major was always awarded him in the playbills, still appeared as Bellamante, one of the heroines of Shirley's tragedy of "Love's Cruelty." But this must have been rather too absurd. At the time of the Restoration Mohun could hardly have been less than thirty-five years of age. It is to be noted, however, that Kynaston, a very distinguished boy-actress, who, with Betterton, was a pupil of Rhodes, arose after the Restoration. Of the earlier boy-actresses, their methods and artifices of performance, Kynaston could have known nothing. He was undoubtedly a great artist, winning extraordinary favour both in male and female characters, the last and perhaps the best of all the epicene stage players of the past.

But if the stage, after the Restoration, differed greatly from what it had been previously, it yet prospered and gained strength more and more. It was most fortunate in its actors and actresses, who lent it invaluable support. It never attained again the poetic heights to which it had once soared ; but it surrendered gradually much of its grossness and its baser qualities, in deference to the improving tastes of its patrons, and in alarm at the sound strictures of men like Jeremy Collier. The plagiarist, the adapter, and the translator did not relax their hold upon it ; but eventually it obtained the aid of numerous dramatists of enduring distinction. The fact that it again underwent decline is traceable to various causes—among them, the monopoly enjoyed by privileged persons under the patents granted by Charles II. ; the bungling intervention of court officials invested with supreme power over the dramatic literature of the nation ; and defective copyright laws, that rendered justice neither to the native nor to the foreign writer for the theatre. And something, too, the stage of later years has been affected by a change in public taste, which has subordinated the play to the novel or poem, and converted playgoers into the supporters of circulating libraries.

## CHAPTER III.

### STAGE BANQUETS.

A VETERAN actor of inferior fame once expressed his extreme dislike to what he was pleased to term "the sham wine parties" of Macbeth and others. He was aweary of the Barmecide banquets of the stage, of affecting to quaff with gusto imaginary wine out of empty pasteboard goblets, and of making believe to have an appetite for wooden apples and "property" comestibles. He was in every sense a poor player, and had often been a very hungry one. He took especial pleasure in remembering the entertainments of the theatre in which the necessities of performance, or regard for rooted tradition, involved the setting of real edible food before the actors. At the same time he greatly lamented the limited number of dramas in which these precious opportunities occurred.

He had grateful memories of the rather obsolete Scottish melodrama of "Cramond Brig;"

for in this work old custom demanded the introduction of a real sheep's head with accompanying "trotters." He told of a North British manager who was wont—especially when the salaries he was supposed to pay were somewhat in arrear, and he desired to keep his company in good humour and, may be, alive—to produce this play on Saturday nights. For some days before the performance the dainties that were destined to grace it underwent exhibition in the green-room. A label bore the inscription: "This sheep's head will appear in the play of 'Cramond Brig' on next Saturday night. God save the King!" "It afforded us all two famous dinners," reveals our veteran. "We had a large pot of broth made with the head and feet; these we ate on Saturday night; the broth we had on Sunday." So in another Scottish play, "The Gentle Shepherd" of Allan Ramsay, it was long the custom on stages north of the Tweed to present a real haggis, although niggard managers were often tempted to substitute for the genuine dish a far less savoury if more wholesome mess of oatmeal. But a play more famous still for the reality of its victuals, and better known to modern times, was Prince Hoare's musical farce, "No Song no Supper." A steaming hot boiled leg of lamb and turnips may be described as quite the leading character in this entertainment. Without this appetising addition the play has never been

represented. There is a story, however, which one can only hope is incorrect, of an *impresario* of Oriental origin, who supplying the necessary meal, yet subsequently fined his company all round on the ground that they had "combined to destroy certain of the properties of the theatre."

There are many other plays in the course of which genuine food is consumed on the stage. But some excuse for the generally fictitious nature of theatrical repasts is to be found in the fact that eating, during performance is often a very difficult matter for the actors to accomplish. Michael Kelly in his "Memoirs" relates that he was required to eat part of a fowl in the supper scene of a bygone operatic play called "A House to be Sold." Bannister at rehearsal had informed him that it was very difficult to swallow food on the stage. Kelly was incredulous, however. "But strange as it may appear," he writes, "I found it a fact that I could not get down a morsel. My embarrassment was a great source of fun to Bannister and Suett, who were both gifted with the accommodating talent of stage feeding. Whoever saw poor Suett as the lawyer in 'No Song no Supper,' tucking in his boiled leg of lamb, or in 'The Siege of Belgrade,' will be little disposed to question my testimony to the fact." From this account, however, it is manifest that the difficulty of "stage feeding," as Kelly calls

it, is not invariably felt by all actors alike. And probably, although the appetites of the superior players may often fail them, the supernumerary or the representative of minor characters could generally contrive to make a respectable meal if the circumstances of the case supplied the opportunity.

The difficulty that attends eating on the stage does not, it would seem, extend to drinking, and sometimes the introduction of real and potent liquors during the performance has led to unfortunate results. Thus Whincop, who, in 1747, published a tragedy called "Scanderbeg," adding to it "a List of all the Dramatic Authors, with some Account of their Lives," &c., describes a curious occurrence at the Theatre Royal in 1693. A comedy entitled "The Wary Widow, or Sir Noisy Parrot," written by one Higden, and now a very scarce book, had been produced; but on the first representation, "the author had contrived so much drinking of punch in the play that the actors almost all got drunk, and were unable to get through with it, so that the audience were dismissed at the end of the third act." Upon subsequent performances of the comedy no doubt the management reduced the strength of the punch, or substituted some harmless beverage, toast-and-water perhaps, imitative of that ardent compound so far as mere colour is concerned. There have been actors, however, who have

refused to accept the innocent semblance of vinous liquor supplied by the management, and especially when, as part of their performance they were required to simulate intoxication. A certain representative of Cassio was wont to carry to the theatre a bottle of claret from his own cellar, whenever he was called upon to sustain that character. It took possession of him too thoroughly, he said, with a plausible air, to allow of his affecting inebriety after holding an empty goblet to his lips, or swallowing mere toast-and-water or small beer. Still his precaution had its disadvantages. The real claret he consumed might make his intemperance somewhat too genuine and accurate ; and his portrayal of Cassio's speedy return to sobriety might be in such wise very difficult of accomplishment. So there have been players of dainty taste, who, required to eat in the presence of the audience, have elected to bring their own provisions, from some suspicion of the quality of the food provided by the management. We have heard of a clown who, entering the theatre nightly to undertake the duties of his part, was observed to carry with him always a neat little paper parcel. What did it contain ? bystanders inquired of each other. Well, in the comic scenes of pantomime it is not unusual to see a very small child, dressed perhaps as a charity-boy, crossing the stage, bearing in his hands

a slice of bread-and-butter. The clown steals this article of food and devours it; whereupon the child, crying aloud, pursues him hither and thither about the stage. The incident always excites much amusement; for in pantomimes the world is turned upside-down, and moral principles have no existence; cruelty is only comical, and outrageous crime the best of jokes. The paper parcel borne to the theatre by the clown under mention enclosed the bread-and-butter that was to figure in the harlequinade. "You see I'm a particular feeder," the performer explained. "I can't eat bread-and-butter of any one's cutting. Besides, I've tried it, and they only afford salt butter. I can't stand that. So as I've got to eat it and no mistake, with all the house looking at me, I cut a slice when I'm having my own tea, at home, and bring it down with me."

Rather among the refreshments of the side-wings than of the stage must be counted that reeking tumbler of "very brown, very hot, and very strong brandy-and-water," which, as Dr. Doran relates, was prepared for poor Edmund Kean, as, towards the close of his career, he was wont to stagger from before the footlights, and, overcome by his exertions and infirmities, to sink, "a helpless, speechless, fainting, bent-up mass," into the chair placed in readiness to receive the shattered, ruined actor. With Kean's prototype in acting and

in excess, George Frederick Cooke, it was less a question of stage or side-wing refreshments than of the measure of preliminary potation he had indulged in. In what state would he come down to the theatre? Upon the answer to that inquiry the entertainments of the night greatly depended. "I was drunk the night before last," Cooke said on one occasion; "still I acted, and they hissed me. Last night I was drunk again, and I didn't act; they hissed all the same. There's no knowing how to please the public." A fine actor, Cooke was also a genuine humorist, and it must be said for him, although a like excuse has been perhaps too often pleaded for such failings as his, that his senses gave way, and his brain became affected after very slight indulgence. From this, however, he could not be persuaded to abstain, and so made havoc of his genius, and terminated, prematurely and ignobly enough, his professional career.

Many stories are extant as to performances being interrupted by the entry of innocent messengers bringing to the players, in the presence of the audience, refreshments they had designed to consume behind the scenes, or sheltered from observation between the wings. Thus it is told of one Walls, who was the prompter in a Scottish theatre, and occasionally appeared in minor parts, that he once directed a maid-of-all-work, employed in the wardrobe department of the theatre, to

bring him a gill of whisky. The night was wet, so the girl, not caring to go out, intrusted the commission to a little boy who happened to be standing by. The play was "Othello," and Walls played the Duke. The scene of the senate was in course of representation. Brabantio had just stated :

My particular grief  
Is of so flood-gate and o'erbearing nature,  
That it engluts and swallows other sorrows,  
And it is still itself—

and the Duke, obedient to his cue, had inquired :

Why, what's the matter ?

when the little boy appeared upon the stage, bearing a pewter measure, and explained, "It's just the whisky, Mr. Walls ; and I could na git ony at fourpence, so yer awn the landlord a penny ; and he says it's time you was payin' what's doon i' the book." The senate broke up amidst the uproarious laughter of the audience.

Upon our early stage a kind of biscuit—a "marchpane"—was consumed by the players when they required to eat upon the stage. In "Romeo and Juliet" one of the servants says : "Good thou, save me a piece of marchpane." And in Brome's "City Wit" Mrs. Pyannet tells Toby Sneakup : "You have your kick-shaws, your players' marchpanes, all show and no meat."

Real macaroni in "Masaniello," and real champagne in "Don Giovanni," in order that Leporello may have opportunities for "comic business" in the supper scene, are demanded by the customs of the operatic stage. Realism generally, indeed, is greatly affected in the modern theatre. The audiences of to-day require not merely that real water shall be seen to flow from a pump, or to form a cataract, but that real wine shall proceed from real bottles, and be fairly swallowed by the performers. In Paris, a complaint was recently made that, in a scene representing an entertainment in modern fashionable society, the champagne supplied was only of a second-rate quality. Through powerful opera-glasses the bottle labels could be read, and the management's sacrifice of truthfulness to economy was severely criticised. The audience resented the introduction of the cheaper liquor as though they had themselves been constrained to drink it.

As part also of the modern regard for realism may be noted the "cooking scenes" which have frequently figured in recent plays. The old conjuring trick of making a pudding in a hat never won more admiration than is now obtained by such simple expedients as frying bacon or sausages, or broiling chops or steaks upon the stage in sight of the audience. The manufacture of paste for puddings or pies by one of the *dramatis personæ* has also been

very favourably received, and the first glimpse of the real rolling-pin and the real flour to be thus employed, has always been attended with applause. In a late production, the opening of a soda-water bottle by one of the characters was generally regarded as quite the most impressive effect of the representation.

At Christmas-time, when the shops are so copiously supplied with articles of food as to suggest a notion that the world is content to live upon half-rations at other seasons of the year, there is extraordinary storing of provisions at certain of the theatres. These are not edible, however ; they are due to the art of the property-maker, and are designed for what are known as the "spill and pelt" scenes of the pantomime. They represent juicy legs of mutton, brightly streaked with red and white, quartern loaves, trussed fowls, turnips, carrots, and cabbages, strings of sausages, fish of all kinds, sizes, and colours ; they are to be stolen and pocketed by the clown, recaptured by the policeman, and afterwards wildly whirled in all directions in a general "rally" of all the characters in the harlequinade. They are but adroitly painted canvas stuffed with straw or sawdust. No doubt the property-maker sometimes views from the wings with considerable dismay the severe usage to which his works of art are subjected. "He's an excellent clown, sir," one such was once heard to say, regarding from his own standpoint the performance of

---

the jester in question ; “ he don’t destroy the properties as some do.” Perhaps now and then, too, a minor actor or a supernumerary, who has derided “ the sham wine parties of Macbeth and others,” may lament the scandalous waste of seeming good victuals in a pantomime. But, as a rule, these performers are not fanciful on this, or, indeed, on any other subject. They are not to be deceived by the illusions of the stage ; they are themselves too much a part of its shams and artifices. Property legs of mutton are to them not even food for reflection, but simply “ properties,” and nothing more. Otherwise, a somewhat too cynical disposition might be unfortunately encouraged ; and the poor player, whose part requires him to be lavish of banknotes of enormous amount upon the stage, and the hungry “ super,” constrained to maltreat articles of food which he would prize dearly if they were but real, might be too bitterly affected by noting the grievous discrepancy existing between their private and their public careers—the men they are and the characters they seem to be.

## CHAPTER IV.

### STAGE WIGS.

WIGS have claims to be considered amongst the most essential appliances of the actors; means at once of their disguise and their decoration. Without false hair the fictions of the stage could scarcely be set forth. How could the old look young, or the young look old, how could scanty locks be augmented, or baldness concealed, if the *coiffeur* did not lend his aid to the costumier? Nay, oftentimes calvity has to be simulated, and fictitious fore-heads of canvas assumed. Hence the quaint advertisements of the theatrical hairdresser in professional organs, that he is prepared to vend "old men's bald pates" at a remarkably cheap rate. King Lear has been known to appear without his beard—indeed Mr. Garrick, as his portraits reveal, played the part with a clean-shaven face, wearing ruffles, knee-breeches, silk stockings, and diamond buckles, in strange contrast with his flowing robe of ermine.

trimmed velvet; but could the ghost of Hamlet's father ever have defied the poet's portraiture of him, and walked the platform of Elsinore Castle without a "sable-silvered" chin? Has an audience ever viewed tolerantly a bald Romeo, or a Juliet grown gray in learning how to impersonate that heroine to perfection? It is clear that at a very early date the players must have acquired the simple arts of altering and amending their personal appearance in these respects.

The accounts still extant of the revels at court during the reigns of Elizabeth and James contain many charges for wigs and beards. Thus a certain John Ogle is paid "for four yeallowe heares for head attires for women, twenty-six shillings and eightpence;" and "for a pound of heare twelvepence." Probably the auburn tresses of Elizabeth had made blonde wigs fashionable. John Owgle, who is no doubt the same trader, receives thirteen shillings and fourpence for "eight long white berds at twenty pence the peece." He has charges also on account of "a black fyzician's berde," "berds white and black," "heares for palmers," "berds for fyshers," &c. It would seem, however, that these adornments were really made of silk. There is an entry: "John Ogle for curling of heare made of black silk for Discord's heade (being sixty ounces), price of his woorkmanshipp thereon only is seven shillings and eightpence." And mention is

made of a delivery to Mrs. Swegoo the silk-woman, of "Spanish silke of sundry cullers weighing four ounces and three quarters, at two shillings and sixpence the ounce, to garnishe nine heads and nine skarfes for the nine muzes ; heads of heare drest and trimmed at twenty-three shillings and fourpence the peece, in all nine, ten pounds ten shillings."

The diary or account-book of Philip Henslowe, the manager, supplies much information concerning the usual appointments of a theatre prior to the year 1600. In his inventory of dresses and properties, bearing date 1598, is included a record of "six head tiers," or attires. An early and entertaining account of the contents of a theatrical "tiring-room" is to be found in Richard Brome's comedy, "The Antipodes," first published in 1640, Bye-play says of Peregrine, the leading comic character :

He has got into our tiring-house amongst us,  
And ta'en a strict survey of all our properties,  
Our statues and our images of gods,  
Our planets and our constellations,  
Our giants, monsters, furies, beasts and bugbears,  
Our helmets, shields, and vizors, hairs and beards.

With the Restoration wigs came into general wear, and gradually the beards and moustaches which had literally flourished so remarkably from the time of Elizabeth were yielded to the razor. At this period theatrical costume was simply regulated by the prevailing fashions, and made no pretensions to historical truth

or antiquarian correctness. The actors appeared upon all occasions in the enormous perukes that were introduced in the reign of Charles II., and continued in vogue until 1720. The flowing flaxen wigs assumed by Booth, Wilks, Cibber, and others, were said to cost some forty guineas each. "Till within these twenty-five years," writes Tom Davies in 1784, "our Tamerlanes and Catos had as much hair on their heads as our judges on the bench." Cibber narrates how he sold a superb fair full-bottomed periwig he had worn in 1695 in his first play, "The Fool in Fashion," to Colonel Brett, so that the officer might appear to advantage in his wooing of the Countess of Macclesfield, the lady whom, upon unsatisfactory evidence, the poet Savage persistently claimed as his mother.

But if the heroes of the theatre delighted in long flaxen hair, it was always held necessary that the stage villains should appear in jet-black periwigs. For many years this continued to be an established law of the drama. "What is the meaning," demanded Charles II., "that we never see a rogue in the play, but odds-fish ! they always clap him on a black periwig, when it is well known one of the greatest rogues in England always wears a fair one ?" The king was understood to refer to Titus Oates. But this custom was of long life. Davies describes "certain actors who were cast into the parts of conspirators, traitors,

and murderers, who used to disguise themselves in large black wigs, and to distort their features in order to appear terrible. I have seen," he adds, " Hippesley act the First Murderer in *Macbeth*; his face was made pale with chalk, distinguished with large whiskers and a long black wig." "Begin, murderer; leave thy damnable faces and begin!" cries Hamlet to Lucianus, the poisoner; so that even in Shakespeare's time grimness of aspect on the part of the stage villain may have been thought indispensable. Churchhill's friend, Lloyd, in his admirable poem, "The Actor," published in 1762, writes on this head :

To suit the dress demands the actor's art,  
Yet there are those who over-dress the part:  
To some prescriptive right gives settled things—  
Black wigs to murderers, feathered hats to kings.

Quin appeared upon the stage almost invariably in a profuse full-bottomed periwig. Garrick brought into fashion a wig of much smaller size, worn low on the forehead, with five crisp curls on either side, and known generally as the "Garrick cut." But the great actor occasionally varied the mode of his periuke. The portraits by Wood, Sherwin, and Dance exhibit him in three different forms of wigs. As Hotspur, he wore "a laced frock and Ramilies wig." This costume was objected to, not as being anachronistic, but as "too insignificant for the character." When John Kemble first played Hamlet he appeared in a

black velvet court suit, with laced ruffles and powdered hair, if not a periwig. It is to be noted, however, that there was nothing in this system of dress to shock the spectators of the time. Powdered wigs were the vogue, and it was not considered strange that the actor should be attired similarly to the audience. Some ventures had been made in the direction of correctness of costume, but they had been regarded as rather dangerous innovations. Garrick candidly confessed himself timid about the matter. Benjamin West once inquired of the actor why he did not reform the costume of the stage. "The audience would not stand it," said Garrick; "they would throw a bottle at my head if I attempted any alteration." The truth was, perhaps, that Garrick had won his triumphs under the old system, and was disinclined, therefore, to risk any change.

Actors have often been zealous treasurers of theatrical properties and appliances, and some have formed very curious collections of stage wigs. Munden, who was most heedful as to his appearance in the theatre, always provided his own costume, wearing nothing that belonged to the wardrobe of the manager, and giving large sums for any dress that suited his fancy. His wigs were said to be of great antiquity and value; they were in the care of, and daily inspected by, a hairdresser attached to the theatre. Edwin's biographer

records that that actor's "wiggery cost him more than a hundred pounds, and he could boast of having perukes in his collection which had decorated the heads of monarchs, judges, aldermen, philosophers, sailors, jockeys, beaux, thieves, tailors, tinkers, and haberdashers." Suett, also a great wig-collector, is reputed to have assumed on the stage, in the burlesque of "Tom Thumb," a large black peruke with flowing curls, that had once been the property of King Charles II. He had purchased this curious relic at the sale of the effects of a Mr. Rawle, accoutrement-maker to George III. When the wig was submitted for sale, Suett took possession of it, and, putting it on his head, began to bid for it with a gravity that the bystanders found to be irresistibly comical. It was at once declared that the wig should become the actor's property upon his own terms, and it was forthwith knocked down to him by the auctioneer. The wig appeared upon the stage during many years, until at last it was destroyed, with much other valuable property, in the fire which burnt to the ground the Birmingham Theatre. Suett's grief was extreme. "My wig's gone!" he would say, mournfully, for some time after the fire, to every one he met. Suett, Mathews, and Knight were at one time reputed to possess the most valuable stock of wigs in the profession. Knight's collection was valued, after his death, at £250.

The stage wig is sometimes liable to unfortunate accidents. In the turbulent scenes of tragedy, when the catastrophe is reached, and the hero, mortally stricken, falls upon the stage heavily and rigidly, in accordance with the ruling of immemorial tradition, the wig like an unskilful rider upon a restive steed, is apt to become unseated. Many a defunct Romeo has been constrained to return to life for a moment in order that he might entreat Juliet, in a whisper, just as her own suicide is imminent, to contrive, if possible, a readjustment of his wig, which, in the throes of his demise, had parted from his head, or, at least, to fling her veil over him, and so conceal his mischance from public observation. To Mr. Bensley, the tragedian, so much admired by Charles Lamb, and so little by any other critic, a curious accident is said to have happened. He was playing Richard III. in an Irish theatre ; the curtain had risen, and he was advancing to the footlights to deliver his opening soliloquy, when an unlucky nail in the side-wing caught a curl of his full-flowing majestic wig, and dragged it from his head. He was a pedantic, solemn actor, with a sepulchral voice, and a stiff stalking gait. Anthony Pasquin has recorded a derisive description of his histrionic method :

With three minuet steps in all parts he advances,  
Then retires three more, strokes his chin, prates and prances,  
With a port as majestic as Astley's horse dances.

\* \* \*

---

Should we judge of this man by his visage and note,  
We'd imagine a rookery built in his throat,  
Whose caws were immixed with his vocal recitals,  
While others stole downwards and fed on his vitals.

Still there can be no doubt that he played with extreme conscientiousness, and was fully impressed with a sense of his professional responsibilities. The loss of his wig must have occasioned him acute distress. For a moment he hesitated. What was he to do? Should he forget that he was Richard? Should he remember that he was only Mr. Bensley? He resolved to ignore the accident, to abandon his wig. Shorn of his locks, he delivered his speech in his most impressive manner. Of course he had to endure many interruptions. An Irish audience is rarely forbearing—has a very quick perception of the ludicrous. The jeering and ironic cheering that arose must have gravely tried the tragedian. "Mr. Bensley, darling, put on your jasey!" cried the gallery. "Bad luck to your politics! Will you suffer a Whig to be hung?" But the actor did not flinch. His exit was as dignified and commanding as had been his entrance. He did not even condescend to notice his wig as he passed it, depending from its nail like a scarecrow. One of the attendants of the stage was sent on to remove it, the duty being accomplished amidst the most boisterous laughter and applause of the whole house.

Mr. Bernard, in his "Retrospections of the

Stage," makes humorous mention of a provincial manager of the last century who was always referred to as "Pentland and his wig," from his persistent adherence to an ancient peruke, which, as he declared, had once belonged to Colley Cibber. The wig was of the pattern worn on state occasions by the Lord Chief Justice of England, a structure of horse-hair, that descended to the shoulders in dense lappels. Pentland, who had been fifty years a manager, was much bent with infirmity, and afflicted with gout in all his members, still was wont to appear as the juvenile heroes of the drama. But in his every part, whether Hamlet or Don Felix, Othello or Lord Townley, he invariably assumed this formidable wig. Altogether his aspect and performance must have been of an extraordinary kind. He played Plume, the lively hero of Farquhar's "Recruiting Officer," dressed in an old suit of regimentals, and wearing above his famous wig a prodigious cocked hat. The rising of the curtain discovered him seated in an easy-chair, with his lower limbs swathed in flannels. He was, indeed, unable to walk, or even to stand, and throughout the performance had to be wheeled on and off the stage. Surely light comedy was never seen under such disadvantageous conditions. He endeavoured to compensate for his want of locomotive power by taking snuff with great frequency, and waving energetically in the air a large and soiled

---

pocket-handkerchief. This Pentland, indeed, appears to have been a curious example of the strolling manager of the old school. His company consisted but of some half-dozen performers, including himself, his wife, and his daughter. He journeyed from town to town on a donkey, the faithful companion of all his wanderings, with his gouty legs resting upon the panniers, into which were packed the wardrobe and scenic embellishments of his theatre. On these occasions he always wore his best light comedy suit of brown and gold, his inevitable wig, and a little three-cornered hat cocked on one side, "giving the septuagenarian an air of gaiety that well accorded with his known attachment to the rakes and heroes of the drama ; one hand was knuckled in his side—his favourite position—and the other raised a pinch of snuff to his nose ; and as he passed along he nodded and bowed to all about him, and seemed greatly pleased with the attention he excited." His company followed the manager on foot. Yet for many years Mr. Pentland was the sole purveyor of theatrical entertainments to several English counties, and did not shrink from presenting to his audiences the most important works in the dramatic repertory.

When in 1817 Edmund Kean played Eustache de Saint Pierre in the play of "The Surrender of Calais," he designed to impress the town powerfully by the help of a wig

made after the pattern of Count Ugolino's. "I'll frighten the audience with it," said he ; but, as it happened, the audience declined to be frightened. On the contrary, when the actor appeared upon the scene he was only partially recognised by the spectators. Some persons even inquired, "Who is that fellow ?" None cried, "God bless him !" The wig, in short, was not appreciated, for all it was of elaborate construction, and stood up, bristling with its gray hairs like a *chevaux de frise*. The tragedian very soon gave up the part in disgust.

It is odd to find a stage wig invested with political significance, viewed almost as a cabinet question, considered as a possible provocation of hostilities between two great nations ; yet something of this kind happened some forty years ago. Mr. Bunn, then manager of Covent Garden Theatre, had adapted to the English stage Monsieur Scribe's capital comedy of "Bertrand et Raton." The scene of the play, it may be stated, is laid at Copenhagen, and the subject relates to the intrigues that preceded the fall of Struensee in 1772. The adaptation was duly submitted to George Colman, the examiner of plays, and was by him forwarded to the Earl of Belfast, then Lord Chamberlain, with an observation that the work contained nothing of a kind that was inadmissible upon the English stage.

Suddenly a rumour was born, and rapidly

attained growth and strength, to the purport that the leading character of Count Bertrand was designed to be a portraiture of Talleyrand, at that time the French ambassador at the court of St. James's. Some hesitation arose as to licensing the play, and on the 17th of January, 1834, the authorities decided to prohibit its representation. Mr. Bunn sought an interview with the Chamberlain, urging a reversal of the judgment, and undertaking to make any retrenchments and modifications of the work that might be thought expedient. The manager could only obtain a promise that the matter should be further considered. Already the stage had been a source of trouble to the political and diplomatic world. It was understood that the Swedish ambassador had abruptly withdrawn from the court of the Tuilleries in consequence of the production in Paris of a vaudeville called "Le Camarade au Lit," reflecting, so many held, upon the early life of Bernadotte, King of Sweden. That nothing of this kind should happen in London the Chamberlain was determined. He read the comedy most carefully and, having marked several passages as objectionable, forwarded it to the examiner, from whom, in due course, Mr. Bunn received the following characteristic note:

"January 20th, 1834.

"MY DEAR B.—With all we have to do,

I don't see how I can return the manuscript with alterations before to-morrow. Pray dine with me to-day at half-past five—but come at four. We shall then have time to cut the play before we cut the mutton.

“Yours most truly,  
“G. C.”

Both these “cuttings” were successfully accomplished, and on the 25th of January the comedy was officially licensed. Still the authorities were uneasy. A suspicion prevailed that Mr. Farren, who was to sustain the part of Bertrand, meditated dressing and “making up” after the manner of Talleyrand. Sir Thomas Mash, the comptroller of the Chamberlain’s office, made direct inquiries in this respect. The manager supplied a sketch of the costume to be worn by the actor. “I knew it was to be submitted to the king,” writes Mr. Bunn, and he looked forward to the result with anxious curiosity. On the 7th of February came an answer from Sir Thomas Mash. “I have the pleasure to return your drawing without a syllable of objection.” On the 8th, “Bertrand et Raton,” under the name of “The Minister and the Mercer,” was first produced on the English stage.

The success of the performance was unquestionable, but the alarms of the authorities were not over. Many of the players took

upon themselves to restore passages in the comedy which had been effaced by the examiner ; and, worse than this, Mr. Farren's appearance did not correspond with the drawing sent to the Chamberlain's office. His wig was especially objectionable ; it was an exact copy of the silvery silken tresses of Talleyrand, which had acquired a European celebrity. It was plain that the actor had "made up" after the portrait of the statesman in the well-known engravings of the Congress of Vienna. Mr. Bunn had again to meet the angry expostulations of the Chamberlain. On the 14th of February he wrote to Lord Belfast : "The passages bearing reference to the Queen Matilda in conjunction with Struensee having been entirely omitted, will, I trust, be satisfactory to your lordship. Until the evening of performance I was not aware what style of wig Mr. Farren meant to adopt, such matters being entirely at the discretion of performers of his standard. I have since mentioned to him the objections which have been pointed out to me, but he has sent me word that he cannot consent so to mutilate his appearance, adding that it is a wig he wore two years ago in a comedy called 'Lords and Commons.'" If this was true there can be little doubt that the wig had been dressed anew and curling-ironed into a Talleyrand form that had not originally pertained to it. Meantime King William IV. had stirred in

the matter, despatching his Chamberlain to the Lords Grey and Palmerston. “They—said to be exceedingly irate—instantly attended the performance. In the box exactly opposite to the one they occupied, sat, however, the gentleman himself, *l'homme véritable*, His Excellency Prince Talleyrand, *in propriâ personâ*, and he laughed so heartily at the play, without once exhibiting any signs of annoyance at the appearance of his supposed prototype, that the whole affair wore a most absurd aspect; and thus terminated a singular specimen of ‘great cry and little wool.’”

A stage wig has hardly since this risen to the importance of a state affair. Yet the Chamberlain has sometimes interfered to stay any direct stage portraiture of eminent characters. Thus Mr. Buckstone has been prohibited from appearing “made up” as Lord John Russell, and Mr. A. Wigan, when performing the part of a French naval officer some five-and-twenty years ago, was directed by the authorities to reform his aspect, which too much resembled, it was alleged, the portraits of the Prince de Joinville. The actor effected a change in this instance which did not much mend the matter. It was understood at the time indeed that he had simply made his costume more correct, and otherwise had rather heightened than diminished his resemblance to the son of Louis Philippe. Other stage wig questions have been

of minor import—relating chiefly to the appropriateness of the *coiffures* of Hamlet and others. Should the Prince wear flaxen tresses or a “Brutus”? Should the Moor of Venice appear in a negro’s close woolly curls, or are flowing locks permissible to him? These inquiries have a good deal exercised the histrionic profession from time to time. And there have been doubts about hair-powder and its compatibility with tragic purposes. Mademoiselle Mars, the famous French actress, decided upon defying accuracy of costume, and declined to wear a powdered wig in a serious part. Her example was followed by Rachel, Ristori, and others. When Auber’s “Gustave, ou le Bal Masqué” was in rehearsal, the singers complained of the difficulty they experienced in expressing passionate sentiments in the powdered wigs and stately dress of the time of Louis XV. In the masquerade they were therefore permitted to assume such costumes as seemed to them suited to the violent catastrophe of the story. They argued that “*le moindre geste violent peut exciter le rire en provoquant l’explosion d’un nuage blanc ; les artistes sont donc contraints de se tenir dans une réserve et dans une immobilité qui jettent du froid sur toutes les situations.*” It is true that Garrick and his contemporaries wore hair-powder, and that in their hands the drama certainly did not lack vehemently emotional displays. But then the spectators were in like

case ; and "*explosions d'un nuage blanc*" were probably of too common occurrence to excite derision or even attention.

Wigs are still matters of vital interest to the actors, and it is to be noted that the theatrical hairdressers have of late years devoted much study to this branch of their industry. The light comedian still indulges sometimes in curls of an unnatural flaxen, and the comic countryman is too often allowed to wear locks of a quite impossible crimson colour. Indeed, the headdresses that seem only contrived to move the laughter of the gallery, yet remain in an unsatisfactory condition. But in what are known as "character wigs" there has been marked amendment. The fictitious forehead is now very often artfully joined on to the real brow of the performer, without those distressing discrepancies of hue and texture which at one time were so very apparent, disturbing credibility and destroying illusion. And the decline of hair in colour and quantity has often been imitated in the theatre with very happy ingenuity. Heads in an iron-gray or partially bald state—varying from the first slight thinning of the locks to the time when they come to be combed over with a kind of "cat's cradle" or trellis-work look, to veil absolute calvity—are now represented by the actors with a completeness of a most artistic kind. With the ladies of the theatre blond wigs are now almost to be regarded as necessities of histrionic life.

This may be only a transient fashion, although it seems to have obtained very enduring vitality. Dr. Véron, writing of his experiences as manager of the Paris Opera House forty years ago, affirms : “*Il y a des beautés de jour et des beautés du soir ; une peau brune, jaune ou noire, devient blanche à éclat de la lumière ; les cheveux noirs réussissent mieux aussi au théâtre que les cheveux blonds.*” But the times have changed ; the arts of the theatrical toilet have no doubt advanced greatly. On the stage now all complexions are brilliant, and light tresses are pronounced to be more admirable than dark. Yet Dr. Véron was not without skill and learning on these curious matters. He discourses learnedly in regard to the cosmetics of the theatre—paint and powder, Indian ink and carmine, and the chemical preparations necessary for the due fabrication of eyebrows and lashes, for making the eyes look larger than life, for colouring the cheeks and lips, and whitening the nose and forehead. And especially the manager took pride in the capillary artifices of his establishment, and employed an “artist in hair,” who held almost arrogant views of his professional acquirements. “My claim to the grateful remembrance of posterity,” this superb *coiffeur* was wont to observe, “will consist in the fact that I made the wig in which Monsieur Talma performed his great part of *Sylla !*” The triumphs of the scene are necessarily short-lived ; they exist only in the

recollection of actual spectators, and these gradually dwindle and depart as Time goes and Death comes. Nevertheless something of this wig-maker's fame still survives, although Talma has been dead nearly half a century.

As Sylla, Talma was "made up" to resemble the first Napoleon. Macready writes in his "Journal" of Talma's appearance as Sylla: "The toga sat upon him as if it had been his daily costume. His *coiffure* might have been taken from an antique bust; but was in strict resemblance of Napoleon's. It was reported that several passages had been struck out of the text by the censor under the apprehension of their application by the Parisians to the exiled Emperor; and an order was said to have been sent from the police forbidding Talma to cross his hands behind him, the ordinary habit of Napoleon." The tragedy of "Sylla" was written by M. Jouy, and was first performed at the Théâtre Français in 1822.

## CHAPTER V.

### “ALARUMS AND EXCURSIONS.”

It is clear that playgoers of the Shakespearian period dearly loved to see a battle represented upon the stage. The great poet thoroughly understood his public, and how to gratify it. In some fifteen of his plays he has introduced the encounter or the marshalling of hostile forces. “Alarums and excursions” is with him a very frequent stage direction ; and as much may be said of “they fight,” or “*exeunt* fighting.” Combats and the clash of arms he obviously did not count as “inexplicable dumb show and noise.” He was conscious, however, that the battles of the stage demanded a very large measure of faith on the part of the spectators. Of necessity they were required to “make believe” a good deal. In the prologue to “Henry V.” especial apology is advanced for the presumption of the dramatist in dealing with so comprehensive a subject ;

and indulgence is claimed for the unavoidable feebleness of the representation as compared with the force of the reality :

Piece out our imperfections with your thoughts ;  
Into a thousand parts divide one man,  
And make imaginary puissance :  
Think, when we talk of horses, that you see them  
Printing their proud hoofs i' the receiving earth ;  
For 'tis your thoughts that now must deck our kings,  
Carry them here and there ; jumping o'er times ;  
Turning th' accomplishment of many years  
Into an hour-glass.

These conditions, however, were accepted by the audiences of the time in the most liberal spirit. Critics were prone to deride the popular liking for "cutler's work" and "the horrid noise of target fight;" "the fools in the yard" were censured for their "gaping and gazing" at such exhibitions. But the battles of the stage were still fought on ; "alarums and excursions" continued to engage the scene. Indeed, variety and stir have always been elements in the British drama as opposed to the uniformity and repose which were characteristics of the ancient classical theatre.

Yet our early audiences must have been extremely willing to help out the illusions of the performance, and abet the tax thus levied upon their credulity. Shakespeare's battles could hardly have been very forcibly presented. In his time no "host of auxiliaries" assisted the company. "Two armies flye in," Sir Philip Sidney writes in his "Apologie for Poetrie," 1595, "represented with four swords

and bucklers, and what harde heart will not receive it for a pitched field ?" So limited an array would not be deemed very impressive in these days ; but it was held sufficient by the lieges of Elizabeth. Just as the Irish peasant is even now content to describe a mere squad of soldiers as "the army," so Shakespeare's audiences were willing to regard a few "blue-coated stage-keepers" as a formidable body of troops. And certainly the poet sometimes exercised to the utmost the imaginations of his patrons. He required them to believe that his small stage was immeasurably spacious ; that his handful of "supers" was in truth a vast multitude. During one scene in "King John" he does not hesitate to bring together upon the boards the three distinct armies of Philip of France, the Archduke of Austria, and the King of England ; while, in addition, the citizens of Angiers are supposed to appear upon the walls of their town and discuss the terms of its capitulation. So in "King Richard III.," Bosworth Field is represented, and the armies of Richard and Richmond are made to encamp within a few feet of each other. The ghosts of Richard's victims rise from the stage and address speeches alternately to him and to his opponent. Playgoers who can look back a score of years may remember a textual revival of the tragedy, in which this scene was exhibited in exact accordance with the original stage directions. Colley Cibber's famous acting version was for

once discarded, and Richard and Richmond on the eve of their great battle quietly retired to rest in the presence of each other, and of their audience. However to be commended on the score of its fidelity to the author's intentions, the scene had assuredly its ludicrous side. The rival tents wore the aspect of opposition shower-baths. It was exceedingly difficult to humour the idea that the figures occupying the stage could neither see nor hear one another. Why, if they but outstretched their arms they could have touched each other ; and they were supposed to be mutually eager for combat to the death ! It became manifest, indeed, that the spectators had lost greatly their ancestors' old power of "making believe." They could no longer hold their reason in suspense for the sake of enhancing the effect of a theatrical performance, though prepared to be indulgent in that respect. What is called "realism" had invaded the stage since Shakespeare's time, and could not now be repelled or denied. Hints and suggestions did not suffice ; the positive and the actual had become indispensable.

There can be no doubt, however, that Shakespeare's battles had oftentimes the important aid of real gunpowder. The armies might be small ; but the noise that accompanied their movements was surely very great. The stage direction "alarums and chambers go off" occurs more than once in

“King Henry V.” The Chorus to the play expressly states:

Behold the ordnance on their carriages,  
With fatal mouths gaping on girded Harfleur;  
. . . . . and the nimble gunner  
With linstock now the devilish cannon touches,  
And down goes all before them.

Gunpowder was even employed in plays wherein battles were not introduced. Thus at the close of "Hamlet," Fortinbras says, "Go bid the soldiers shoot," and the stage direction runs, "A dead march. *Exeunt* bearing off the dead bodies; after which a peal of ordnance is shot off." And just as, in 1846, the Garrick Theatre, in Goodman's Fields, was destroyed by fire, owing to some wadding lodging in the flies after a performance of the Battle of Waterloo, so in 1613, the Globe Theatre, in Southwark, was burnt to the ground from the firing of "chambers" during a representation of "King Henry VIII." Howes, in his additions to "Stow's Chronicle," thus describes the event: "Also upon St. Peter's Day, 1613, the play-house or theatre called the Globe, upon the Bankside, near London, by negligent discharging of a peal of ordnance, close to the south side thereof, the theatre took fire, and the wind suddenly dispersed the flame round about, and in a very short space the whole building was quite consumed and no man hurt; the house being filled with people to

behold the play, namely, of ‘Henry VIII. ;’ and the next spring it was new builded in a far fairer manner than before.”

The paucity of Shakespeare’s stage armies has sometimes found its reflex in the limited means of country theatres of more modern date. The ambition of strolling managers is apt to be far in advance of their appliances ; they are rarely stayed by the difficulties of representation, or troubled with doubts as to the adequacy of their troupe, in the words of a famous commander, to “go anywhere and do anything.” We have heard of a provincial Rolla who at the last moment discovered that the army, wherewith he proposed to repulse the forces of Pizarro, consisted of one supernumerary only. The Peruvian chief-tain proved himself equal to the situation, however, and adapted his speech to the case. Addressing his one soldier, he declaimed in his most dignified manner : “ My brave associate, partner of my toil, my feelings, and my fame, can Rolla’s words add vigour to the virtuous energies which inspire your heart ? ” and so on. Thus altered, the speech was found to be sufficiently effective.

In his “Essay of Dramatic Poesy,” Dryden complains of the “tumults to which we are subject in England by representing duels, battles, and the like, which renders our stage too like the theatres where they fight prizes. For what is more ridiculous than to represent

and army with a drum and four men behind it, all which the hero of the other side is to drive before him ? or to see a duel fought and one slain with two or three thrusts of the foils, which we know are so blunted that we might give a man an hour to kill another in good earnest with them ?"

Two things were especially prized by the audiences of the past: a speech and a combat. "For God's sake, George, give me a speech and let me go home !" cried from the pit the wearied country squire of Queen Anne's time to his boon companion Powell, the actor, doomed to appear in a part deficient in opportunities for oratory. "But, Mr. Bayes, might we not have a little fighting ?" inquires Johnson, in the burlesque of "The Rehearsal," "for I love those plays where they cut and slash one another on the stage for a whole hour together."

The single combats that occur in Shakespeare's plays are very numerous. There is little need to remind the reader, for instance, of the hand-to-hand encounters of Macbeth and Macduff, Posthumous and Iachimo, Hotspur and the Prince of Wales, Richard and Richmond. Romeo has his fierce brawl with Tybalt, Hamlet his famous fencing scene, and there is serious crossing of swords both in "Lear" and "Othello." English audiences, from an inherent pugnacity, or a natural inclination for physical feats, were wont to esteem

highly the combats of the stage. The players were skilled in the use of their weapons, and could give excellent effect to their mimic conflicts. And this continued long after the wearing of swords had ceased to be a necessity or a fashion. The youthful actor acquired the art of fencing as an indispensable step in his theatrical education. A sword was one of the earliest "properties" of which he became possessor. He always looked forward to impressing his audience deeply by his skill in combat. Charles Mathews, the elder, has recorded in his too brief chapters of autobiography, "his passion for fencing, which nothing could overcome." As an amateur actor he paid the manager of the Richmond Theatre seven guineas and a half for permission to undertake "the inferior, insipid part of Richmond," who does not appear until the fifth act of the play. The Richard of the night was a brother amateur, equally enthusiastic, one Litchfield by name. "I cared for nothing," wrote Mathews, "except the last scene of Richmond, but in that I was determined to have my full swing of carte and tierce. I had no notion of paying my seven guineas and a half without indulging my passion. In vain did the tyrant try to die after a decent time; in vain did he give indications of exhaustion; I would not allow him to give in. I drove him by main force from any position convenient for his last dying speech. The audience

laughed ; I heeded them not. They shouted ; I was deaf. Had they hooted I should have lunged on in my unconsciousness of their interruption. I was resolved to show them all my accomplishments. Litchfield frequently whispered 'Enough !' but I thought with Macbeth, 'Damned be he who first cries, Hold ! enough !' I kept him at it, and I believe we fought almost literally a long hour by Shrewsbury clock. To add to the merriment, a matter-of-fact fellow in the gallery, who in his innocence took everything for reality, and who was completely wrapt up and lost by the very cunning of the scene, at last shouted out, 'Why don't he shoot him ?'"

The famous Mrs. Jordan was, it seems, unknown to Mathews, present among the audience on this occasion, having been attracted from her residence at Bushey by the announcement of an amateur Richard, "Years afterwards," records Mathews, "when we met in Drury Lane green-room, I was relating, amongst other theatrical anecdotes, the bumpkin's call from the gallery in commiseration of the trouble I had in killing Richard, when she shook me from my feet almost by starting up, clasping her hands, and in her fervent, soul-stirring, warm-hearted tones, exclaiming, 'Was that you ? I was there !' and she screamed with laughter at the recollection of my acting in Richmond, and the length of our combat."

"Where shall I hit you, Mr. Kean ?"

inquired a provincial Laertes of the great tragedian. "Where you *can*, sir," was the grim reply. For Kean had acquired fencing under Angelo, and was proud of his proficiency in the art. He delighted in prolonging his combats to the utmost, and invested them with extraordinary force and intensity. On some occasions he so identified himself with the character he represented as to decline to yield upon almost any terms. Hazlitt censures certain excesses of this kind which disfigured his performance of Richard. "He now actually fights with his doubled fists, after his sword is taken from him, like some helpless infant." "The fight," writes another critic, "was maintained under various vicissitudes, by one of which he was thrown to the earth; on his knee he defended himself, recovered his footing, and pressed his antagonist with renewed fury; his sword was struck from his grasp—he was mortally wounded; disdaining to fall"—and so on. No wonder that many Richmonds and Macduffs, after combating with Mr. Kean, were left so exhausted and scant of breath as to be scarcely able to deliver audibly the closing speeches of their parts. The American stage has a highly-coloured story of an English melodramatic actor with the pseudonym of Bill Shipton, who, "enacting a British officer in 'The Early Life of Washington,' got so stupidly intoxicated that when Miss Cuff, who played the youthfu'

hero, had to fight and kill him in a duel, Bill Shipton wouldn't die ; he even said loudly on the stage that he wouldn't. Mary Cuff fought on until she was ready to faint, and after she had repeated his cue for dying, which was, ' Cowardly, hired assassin !' for the fourteenth time, he absolutely jumped off the stage, not even pretending to be on the point of death. Our indignant citizens then chased him all over the house, and he only escaped by jumping into the coffin which they bring on in *Hamlet*, *Romeo*, and *Richard*." The story has its humour, but is not to be implicitly credited.

Broad-sword combats were at one time very popular interludes at minor theatres. They were often quite distinct performances, prized for their own sake, and quite irrespective of their dramatic relevancy. It cannot be said that they suggested much resemblance to actual warfare. Still they demanded of the performers skill of a peculiar kind, great physical endurance and ceaseless activity. The combat-sword was an unlikely looking weapon, very short in the blade, with a protuberant hilt of curved bars to protect the knuckles of the combatant. The orchestra supplied a strongly accentuated tune, and the swords clashed together in strict time with the music. The fight raged hither and thither about the stage, each blow and parry, thrust and guard, being a matter of strict pre-arrangement. The music was hurried or slackened accordingly as the

combat became more or less furious. "One, two, three, and under ; one, two, three, and over ;" "robber's cuts ;" "sixes"—the encounter had an abundance of technical terms. And each performer was allowed a fair share of the feats accomplished : the combatants took turns in executing the strangest exploits. Alternately they were beaten down on one knee, even lower still, till they crawled serpent-wise about the boards ; they leaped into the air to avoid chopping blows at their lower members ; they suddenly spun round on their heels, recovering themselves in time to guard a serious blow, aimed with too much deliberation, at some vital portion of their frames ; occasionally they contrived an unexpected parry by swiftly passing the sword from the right hand to the left. Now and then they fought a kind of double combat, wielding a sword in either hand. Altogether, indeed, it was an extraordinary entertainment, which evoked thunders of applause from the audience. The eccentric agility of the combatants, the peculiarities of their method of engagement, the stirring staccato music of the band, the clashing of the swords and the shower of sparks thus occasioned were found quite irresistible by numberless playgoers. Mr. Crummles, it will be remembered, had a very high opinion of this form of entertainment.

Of late, however, the broad-sword combat has declined as a theatrical attraction, if it

has not altogether expired. The art involved in its presentment is less studied, or its professors are less capable than was once the case. And perhaps burlesque has exposed too glaringly its ridiculous or seamy side. It was not one of those things that could long endure the assaults of travesty. The spell was potent enough in its way, but it dissolved when once interruptive laughter became generally audible. A creature of theatrical tradition, curiously sophisticated and enveloped in absurdities, its long survival is perhaps more surprising than the fact of its decease. Some attempt at ridiculing it seems to have been made so far back as the seventeenth century in the Duke of Buckingham's "Rehearsal." Two characters enter, each bearing a lute and a drawn sword, and alternately fight and sing; "so that," as Bayes explains, "you have at once your ear entertained with music and good language, and your eye satisfied with the garb and accoutrements of war." In the same play, also, the actors were wont to introduce hobby-horses, and fight a mimic battle of very extravagant nature.

Ridicule of a stage army was one of the established points of humour in the old burlesque of "Bombastes Furioso," and many a pantomime has won applause by the comical character of the troops brought upon the scene. It should be said, however, that of late years the more famous battles of the

theatre have been reproduced with remarkable liberality and painstaking. In lieu of "four swords and bucklers," a very numerous army of supernumeraries has marched to and fro upon the boards. In the ornate revivals of Shakespeare, undertaken from time to time by various managers, especial attention has been directed to the effective presentment of the battle scenes. The "auxiliaries" have frequently consisted of soldiers selected from the household troops. They are reputed to be the best of "supers," imposing of aspect, stalwart and straight-limbed, obedient to command, and skilled in marching and military formations. Londoners, perhaps, are little aware of the services their favourite regiments are prompt to lend to theatrical representations. Notably our grand operas owe much to the Coldstreams and Grenadiers. After a performance of "Le Prophète" or "L'Etoile du Nord," let us say, hosts of these warriors may be seen hurrying from Covent Garden back to their barracks. Plays that have depended for their success solely upon the battles they have introduced have not been frequent of late years, and perhaps their popularity may fairly be counted as a thing of the past. We have left behind us the times when versatile Mr. Gomersal was found submitting to the public by turns his impersonation of Napoleon at Waterloo and Sir Arthur Wellesley at Seringapatam; when Shaw, the Lifeguardsman, after

performing prodigies of valour, died heroically to slow music ; when Lady Sale, armed with pistol and sabre, fought against heavy Afghan odds, and came off supremely victorious. Perhaps the public has ceased to care for history thus theatrically illustrated, or prefers to gather its information on the subject from despatches and special correspondence. The last theatrical venture of this class referred to our army's exploits in Abyssinia. But the play did not greatly please. Modern battles have, indeed, outgrown the stage, and the faculty of making "imaginary puissance" has become lost. In the theatre, as elsewhere, the demand is now for the literal, the accurate, and the strictly matter of fact.

## CHAPTER VI.

### STAGE STORMS.

ADDISON accounted “thunder and lightning—which are often made use of at the descending of a god or the rising of a ghost, at the vanishing of a devil or the death of a tyrant”—as occupying the first place “among the several artifices put in practise by the poets to fill the minds of an audience with terror.” Certainly the stage owes much to its storms : they have long been highly prized both by playwrights and playgoers as awe-inspiring embellishments of the scene ; and it must have been an early occupation of the theatrical machinist to devise some means of simulating the uproar of elemental strife. So far back as 1571, in the “Accounts of the Revels at Court,” there appears a charge of £1 2s. paid to a certain John Izarde “for mony to him due for his device in counterfeting thunder and lightning in the play of ‘Narcisses ;’ and for sundry necessaries by him spent therein ;” while to Robert Moore, the apothecary,

a sum of £1 7s. 4d. is paid for “prepared corianders,” musk, clove, cinnamon, and ginger comfits, rose and “spike” water, “all which,” it is noted, “served for flakes of ice and haylestones in the maske of ‘Janus;’ the rose-water sweetened the balls made for snow-balls, and presented to her majesty by Janus.” The storm in this masque must clearly have been of a very elegant and courtly kind, with sugar plums for hailstones and perfumed water for rain. The tempests of the public theatres were assuredly conducted after a ruder method. In his prologue to “Every Man in his humour,” Ben Jonson finds occasion to censure contemporary dramatists for the “ill customs” of their plays, and to warn the audience that his production is not as others are :

He rather prays you will be pleased to see  
One such to day as other plays should be ;  
Where neither chorus wafts you o'er the seas,  
Nor creaking throne comes down the boys to please,  
Nor nimble squib is seen to make afeard  
The gentlewomen ; nor rolled bullet heard  
To say it thunders ; nor tempestuous drum  
Rumbles to tell you when the storm doth come, &c.

It has been conjectured that satirical allusion was here intended to the writings of Shakespeare; yet it is certain that Shakspeare sustained a part, most probably that of Old Knowell, in the first representation of Jonson’s comedy. Storms are undoubtedly of frequent occurrence in Shakespeare’s plays. Thus

“Macbeth” and the “Tempest” both open with thunder and lightning; there is “loud weather” in “The Winter’s Tale;” there is thunder in the “First Part of King Henry VI.,” when La Pucelle invokes the fiends to aid her endeavours; thunder and lightning in the “Second Part of King Henry VI.,” when Margery Jourdain conjures up the spirit Asmath; thunder and lightning in “Julius Cæsar;” a storm at sea in “Pericles,” and a hurricane in “King Lear.” It is to be noted, however, that all these plays could hardly have been represented so early as 1598, when “Every Man in his Humour” was first performed.

From Jonson’s prologue it appears that the rumbling of thunder was at that time imitated by the rolling to and fro of bullets or cannon-balls. This plan was in time superseded by more ingenious contrivances. It is curious to find, however, that some fifty years ago one Lee, manager of the Edinburgh Theatre, with a view to improving the thunder of his stage, ventured upon a return to the Elizabethan system of representing a storm. His enterprise was attended with results at once ludicrous and disastrous. He placed ledges here and there along the back of his stage, and, obtaining a parcel of nine-pound cannon-balls, packed these in a wheelbarrow, which a carpenter was instructed to wheel to and fro over the ledges. The play was “Lear,” and the jolting of the heavy barrow as it was

trundled along its uneven path over the hollow stage, and the rumblings and reverberations thus produced, counterfeited most effectively the raging of the tempest in the third act. Unfortunately, however, while the king was braving, in front of the scene, the pitiless storm at the back, the carpenter missed his footing, tripped over one of the ledges, and fell down, wheelbarrow, cannon-balls, and all. The stage being on a declivity, the cannon-balls came rolling rapidly and noisily down towards the front, gathering force as they advanced, and overcoming the feeble resistance offered by the scene, struck it down, passed over its prostrate form, and made their way towards the foot-lights and the fiddlers, amidst the amusement and wonder of the audience, and the amazement and alarm of the Lear of the night. As the nine-pounders advanced towards him, and rolled about in all directions, he was compelled to display an activity in avoiding them, singularly inappropriate to the age and condition of the character he was personating. He was even said to resemble a dancer achieving the terpsichorean feat known as the egg hornpipe. Presently, too, the musicians became alarmed for the safety of themselves and their instruments, and deemed it advisable to scale the spiked partition which divided them from the pit; for the cannon-balls were upon them, smashing the lamps, and falling heavily into the orchestra. Meantime, exposed to the full

gaze of the house, lay prone, beside his empty barrow, the carpenter, the innocent invoker of the storm he had been unable to allay or direct, not at all hurt, but exceedingly frightened and bewildered. After this unlucky experiment, the manager abandoned his wheelbarrow and cannon-balls, and reverted to more received methods of producing stage storms.

In 1713, a certain Dr. Reynardson published a poem called “The Stage,” which the critics of the time agreed to be a pretty and ingenious composition. It was dedicated to Addison, the preface stating that “‘The Spectator’s’ account of ‘The Distrest Mother’ had raised the author’s expectation to such a pitch that he made an excursion from college to see that tragedy acted, and upon his return was commanded by the dean to write upon the Art, Rise, and Progress of the English Stage; which how well he has performed is submitted to the judgment of that worthy gentleman to whom it is inscribed.” Dr. Reynardson’s poem is not a work of any great distinction, and need only be referred to here for its mention of the means then in use for raising the storms of the theatre. Noting the strange and incongruous articles to be found in the tiring-room of the players—such as Tarquin’s trousers and Lucretia’s vest, Roxana’s coif and Statira’s stays, the poet proceeds :

Hard by a quart of bottled lightning lies  
A bowl of double use and monstrous size,

Now rolls it high and rumbles in its speed,  
Now drowns the weaker crack of mustard seed ;  
So the true thunder all arrayed in smoke,  
Launched from the skies now rives the knotted oak,  
And sometimes naught the drunkard's prayers prevail,  
And sometimes condescends to sour ale.

There is also allusion to the mustard-bowl as applied to theatrical uses in "The Dunciad :"

Now turn to different sports, the goddess cries,  
And learn my sons, the wondrous power of **NOISE**.  
To move, to raise, to ravish every heart,  
With Shakespeare's nature or with Jonson's art,  
Let others aim ; 'tis yours to shake the soul  
With thunder rumbling from the mustard-bowl.

And further reference to the frequency of stage storms is continued in the well-known lines, written by way of parodying the mention of the Duke of Marlborough in Addison's poem "The Campaign :"

Immortal Rich ! how calm he sits at ease,  
'Mid snows of paper and fierce hail of pease ;  
And proud his mistress' orders to perform  
Rides in the whirlwind and directs the storm.

A note to the early editions of "The Dunciad" explains that the old ways of making thunder and mustard were the same, but that of late the thunder had been advantageously simulated by means of "troughs of wood with stops in them." "Whether Mr. Dennis was the inventor of that improvement, I know not," writes the annotator; "but it is certain that being once at a tragedy of a new author he fell into a great passion at hearing some, and cried, 'Sdeath ! that is my thunder.'" Dennis's thunder was first heard on the production at Drury Lane Theatre, in 1709,

of his "Appius and Virginia," a hopelessly dull tragedy, which not even the united exertions of Booth, Wilkes, and Betterton could keep upon the stage for more than four nights. "The Dunciad" was written in 1726, when Pope either did not really know that the old mustard-bowl style of storm was out of date, or purposely refrained from mentioning the recent invention of "troughs of wood with stops in them."

In July, 1709, Drury Lane Theatre was closed by order of the Lord Chamberlain, whereon Addison published in "The Tatler" a facetious inventory of the goods and movables of Christopher Rich, the manager, to be disposed of in consequence of his "breaking up housekeeping." Among the effects for sale are mentioned—

A mustard-bowl to make thunder with.

Another of a bigger sort, by Mr. D——'s directions, little used.

The catalogue is not of course to be viewed seriously, or it might be inferred that Dennis's new thunder was still something of the mustard-bowl sort. Other items relative to the storms of the stage and their accessories are—

Spirits of right Nantz brandy for lambent flames and apparitions.

Three bottles and a half of lightning.

A sea consisting of a dozen large waves, the tenth bigger than ordinary, and a little damaged.

(According to poetic authority, it may be noted, the tenth wave is always the largest and most dangerous.)

A dozen and a half of clouds trimmed with black, and well conditioned.

A set of clouds after the French mode, streaked with lightning and furbelowed.

One shower of snow in the whitest French paper.

Two showers of a browner sort.

It is probably to this mention of snow-storms we owe the familiar theatrical story of the manager who, when white paper failed him, met the difficulty of the situation by snowing brown.

The humours of the theatre afforded great diversion to the writers in "The Spectator," and the storms of the stage are repeatedly referred to in their essays. In 1711, Steele, discoursing about inanimate performers, published a fictitious letter from "the Salmoneus of Covent Garden," demanding pity and favour on account of the unexpected vicissitudes of his fortune. "I have for many years past," he writes, "been thunderer to the playhouse; and have not only made as much noise out of the clouds as any predecessor of mine in the theatre that ever bore that character, but have also descended, and spoke on the stage as the Bold Thunderer in 'The Rehearsal.' When they got me down thus low, they thought fit to degrade me further, and make me a ghost. I was contented with this for these last two winters; but they carry their tyranny still further, and not satisfied that I am banished from above ground, they have given me to understand that I am wholly to depart from their dominions,

and taken from me even my subterraneous employment." He concludes with a petition that his services may be engaged for the performance of a new opera to be called "The Expedition of Alexander," the scheme of which had been set forth in an earlier "Spectator," and that if the author of that work "thinks fit to use fire-arms, as other authors have done, in the time of Alexander, I may be a cannon against Porus; or else provide for me in the burning of Persepolis, or what other method you shall think fit."

In 1714, Addison wrote: "I look upon the playhouse as a world within itself. They have lately furnished the middle region of it with a new set of meteors in order to give the sublime to many modern tragedies. I was there last winter at the first rehearsal of the new thunder, which is much more deep and sonorous than any hitherto made use of. They have a Salmoneus behind the scenes, who plays it off with great success. Their lightnings are made to flash more briskly than heretofore; their clouds are also better furbelowed and more voluminous; not to mention a violent storm locked up in a great chest that is designed for 'The Tempest.' They are also provided with a dozen showers of snow, which, as I am informed, are the plays of many unsuccessful poets, artificially cut and shredded for that use." In an earlier "Spectator" he had written: "I have often known

a bell introduced into several tragedies with good effect, and have seen the whole assembly in a very great alarm all the while it has been ringing." Pope has his mention in "The Dunciad" of the same artifice :

With horns and trumpets now to madness swell,  
Now sink in sorrow with a tolling bell ;  
Such happy arts attention can command,  
When fancy flags, and sense is at a stand.

The notion of storing lightning in a bottle for use when required seems to have been frequently reverted to by the authors of the last century as a means of entertaining the public. Thus a writer in "The World," in 1754, makes no doubt "of being able to bring thunder and lightning to market at a much cheaper price than common gunpowder," and describes a friend who has applied himself wholly to electrical experiments, and discovered that "the most effectual and easy method of making this commodity is by grinding a certain quantity of air between a glass ball and a bag of sand, and when you have ground it into fire your lightning is made, and then you may either bottle it up, or put it into casks properly seasoned for that purpose, and send it to market." The inventor, however, confesses that what he has hitherto made is not of a sufficient degree of strength to answer all the purposes of natural lightning; but he is confident that he will soon be able to effect this, and has, indeed, already

so far perfected his experiments that, in the presence of several of his neighbours, he has succeeded in producing a clap of thunder which blew out a candle, accompanied by a flash of lightning which made an impression upon a pat of butter standing upon the table. He is also confident that in warm weather he can shake all the pewters upon his shelf, and fully expects, when his thermometer is at sixty-two degrees and a half, to be able to sour all the small beer in his cellar, and to break his largest pier-glass. This paper in "The World," apart from its humorous intention, is curious as a record of early dabblings in electrical experiments. It may be mentioned that in one of Franklin's letters, written apparently before the year 1750, the points of resemblance between lightning and the spark obtained by friction from an electrical apparatus are distinctly stated. It is but some thirty-five years ago that Andrew Crosse, the famous amateur electrician, was asked by an elderly gentleman, who came to witness his experiments with two enormous Leyden jars charged by means of wires stretched for miles among the forest trees near Taunton : "Mr. Crosse, don't you think it is rather impious to bottle the lightning ?"

"Let me answer your question by asking another," said Crosse, laughing. "Don't you think it might be considered rather impious to bottle the rain-water ?"

Further it may be remembered that curious reference to this part of our subject is made by "the gentleman in the small clothes" who lived next door to Mrs. Nickleby, and presumed to descend the chimney of her house. "Very good," he is reported to have said on that occasion, "then bring in the bottled lightning, a clean tumbler, and a corkscrew."

The early days of George Frederick Cooke were passed at Berwick-upon-Tweed. Left an orphan at a very tender age, he had been cared for and reared by two aunts, his mother's sisters, who provided him with such education as he ever obtained. There were no play-books in the library of these ladies, yet somehow the youth contrived to become acquainted with the British drama. Strolling companies occasionally visited the town, and a certain passion for the theatre possessed the boys of Berwick, with Cooke, of course, among them. They formed themselves into an amateur company, and represented, after a fashion, various plays, rather for their own entertainment, however, than the edification of their friends. And they patronised, so far as they could, every dramatic troupe that appeared in the neighbourhood of Berwick. But they had more goodwill than money to bestow upon the strollers, and were often driven to strange subterfuges in their anxiety to see the play, and in their inability to pay the price of admission to the theatre. On one occasion Cooke

and two or three friends secreted themselves beneath the stage, in the hope of stealing out during the performance and joining the audience by means of an opening in a dark passage leading to the pit. Discovery and ignominious ejection followed upon this experiment. Another essay led to a curious adventure. Always on the alert to elude the vigilance of the doorkeeper, the boys again effected an entrance into the theatre. The next consideration was how to bestow themselves in a place of concealment until the time for raising the curtain should arrive, when they might hope in the confusion and bustle behind the scenes, to escape notice, and enjoy the marvels of the show. "Cooke," records his biographer, "espied a barrel, and congratulating himself on this safe and snug retreat, he crept in like the hero of that immortal modern drama, 'Tekeli.'" Unfortunately this hiding-place was one of considerable peril. Cooke perceived that for companion tenants of his barrel he had two large cannon-balls—twenty-four pounders; but being as yet but incompletely initiated into the mysteries of the scene, he did not suspect the theatrical use to which these implements of war were constantly applied. He was in the thunder-barrel of the theatre! The play was "Macbeth," and the thunder was required in the first scene, to give due effect to the entrance of the witches. "The Jupiter Tonans of the theatre, *alias* the

property-man, approached and seized the barrel. Judge the breathless fear of my hero—it was too great for words, and he only shrunk closer to the bottom of his hiding-place. His tormentor proceeded to cover the open end of the barrel with a piece of old carpet, and to tie it carefully, to prevent the thunder from being spilt. Still George Frederick was most heroically silent ; the machine was lifted by the Herculean property-man, and carried carefully to the side scene, lest in rolling the thunder should rumble before its cue. It would be a hopeless task to paint the agitation of the contents of the barrel. The property-man, swearing the barrel was unusually heavy, placed the complicated machine in readiness, the witches entered amid flames of rosin; the thunder-bell rang, the barrel renewed its impetus, and away rolled George Frederick and his ponderous companions. Silence would now have been no virtue, and he roared most manfully, to the surprise of the thunderer, who, neglecting to stop the rolling machine, it entered on the stage, and George Frederick, bursting off the carpet head of the barrel, appeared before the audience just as the witches had agreed to meet when ‘the hurly-burly’s done.’” Cooke’s biographer, Mr. William Dunlap, thought that this story bore “sufficient marks of probability.” It must be said, however, that as to anecdotes touching

their heroes, biographers are greatly prone to be credulous.

The illusions of the stage were much enhanced by Garrick's Alsatian scene-painter, Philip James de Loutherbourg, a man of genius in his way, and an eminent innovator and reformer in the matter of theatrical decoration. Before his time the scenes had been merely strained "flats" of canvas, extending the whole breadth and height of the stage. He was the first to introduce set scenes and what are technically called "raking pieces." He invented transparent scenes, with representations of moonlight, rising and setting suns, fires, volcanoes, &c., and contrived effects of colour by means of silk screens of various hues placed before the foot and side lights. He was the first to represent a mist by suspending a gauze between the scene and the spectator. For two seasons he held a dioramic exhibition of his own, called the *Eidophusikon*, at the Patagonian Theatre in Exeter Change, and afterwards at a house in Panton Square. The special attraction of the entertainment was a storm at sea, with the wreck of the "Hawsewell," East Indiaman. No pains were spared to picture the tempest and its most striking effects. The clouds were movable, painted upon a canvas of vast size, and rising diagonally by means of a winding machine. The artist excelled in his treatment of clouds, and by regulating the action of his windlass he

could direct their movements, now permitting them to rise slowly from the horizon and sail obliquely across the heavens, and now driving them swiftly along according to their supposed density and the power ascribed to the wind. The lightning quivered through transparent places in the sky. The waves, carved in soft wood from models made in clay, coloured with great skill, and highly varnished to reflect the lightning, rose and fell with irregular action, flinging the foam now here, now there, diminishing in size, and dimming in colour, as they receded from the spectator. "De Loutherbourg's genius," we are informed, "was as prolific in imitations of nature to astonish the ear as to charm the sight. He introduced a new art—the picturesque of sound." That is to say, he imitated the noise of thunder by shaking one of the lower corners of a large, thin sheet of copper suspended by a chain; the distant firing of signals of distress from the doomed vessel he counterfeited by suddenly striking a large tambourine with a sponge affixed to a whalebone spring, the reverberations of the sponge producing a peculiar echo as from cloud to cloud dying away in the distance. The rushing, washing sound of the waves was simulated by turning round and round an octagonal pasteboard box, fitted with shelves, and containing small shells, peas, and shot; while two discs of tightly-strained silk, suddenly pressed together, produced a hollow

whistling sound in imitation of loud and fitful gusts of wind. Cylinders, loosely charged with seed and small shot, lifted now at one end, now at the other, so as to allow the contents to fall in a pattering stream, effectually reproduced the noise of hail and rain. The moon was formed by a circular aperture cut in a tin box containing a powerful argand lamp, which was placed at the back of the scene, and brought near or removed from the canvas as the luminary was supposed to be shining brightly or to be obscured by clouds. These contrivances of Mr. de Loutherbourg may now, perhaps, be deemed to be of rather a commonplace description — they have figured so frequently, and in such amplified and amended forms upon the modern stage ; but they were calculated to impress the painter's patrons very considerably ; they were then distinctly innovations due to his curiously inventive genius, and the result of much labour and heedful ingenuity. If the theatrical entertainments of the present time manifest little progress in histrionic art, there has been, at any rate, marked advance in the matter of scenic illusions and mechanical effects. The thunder of our modern stage storms may no more proceed from mustard-bowls, or from "troughs of wood with stops in them," but it is, at any rate, sufficiently formidable and uproarious, sometimes exciting, indeed, the anxiety of the audience, lest it should crash through the roof of

the theatre, and visit them bodily in the pit ; while for our magnesium or lime-light flashes of lightning, they are beyond anything that “ spirit of right Nantz brandy ” could effect in the way of lambent flames, have a vividness that equals reality, and, moreover, leave behind them a pungent and sulphurous odour that may be described as even supernaturally noxious. The stage storm still bursts upon the drama from time to time ; the theatre is still visited in due course by its rainy and tempestuous season ; and thunder and lightning are, as much as in Addison’s time, among the favourite devices of our playwrights—for sufficient reasons, we no longer designate them poets—“ put in practice to fill the minds of an audience with terror.” The terror may not be quite of the old kind, but still it does well enough.

## CHAPTER VII.

### “ DOUBLES.”

THE “doubling” of parts, or the allotment to an actor of more characters than one in the same representation, was an early necessity of theatrical management. The old dramatists delighted in a long catalogue of *dramatis personæ*. There are some fifty “speaking parts” in Shakespeare’s “Henry V.,” for instance; and although it was usual to press even the money-takers into the service of the stage to figure as supernumerary players, there was still a necessity for the regular members of the troupe to undertake dual duties. Certain curious stage directions cited by Mr. Payne Collier from the old extemporal play of “Tamar Cam,” mentioned in Henslowe’s “Diary” under the date of October, 1602, afford evidence of an early system of doubling. In the concluding scene of the play four-and-twenty persons are required to represent the nations conquered by the hero—Tartars, Bactrians,

Cattaians, Pigmies, Cannibals, &c., and to cross the stage in procession in the presence of the leading characters. The names of these performers are supplied, and it is apparent that Messrs. George, Thomas Morbeck, Parsons, W. Parr, and other members of the company, were present early in the scene as nobles and soldiers in attendance upon the conqueror, and later—sufficient time being allowed for them to change their costumes—as representatives of “the people of Bohare, a Cattaiian, two Bactrians,” &c.

In proportion as the actors were few, and the *dramatis personæ* numerous, so the system of doubling, and even trebling parts, more and more prevailed. Especially were the members of itinerant companies compelled to undertake increase of labour of this kind. It was to their advantage that the troupe should be limited in number, so that the money accruing from their performances should not be divided into too many shares, and as a consequence each man’s profit reduced too considerably. Further, it was always the strollers’ principle of action to stick at nothing: to be deterred by no difficulties in regard to paucity of numbers, deficient histrionic gifts, inadequate wardrobes, or absent scenery. They were always prepared to represent, somehow, any play that seemed to them to promise advantages to their treasury. The labours of doubling fell

chiefly on the minor players, for the leading tragedian was too frequently present on the scene as the hero of the night to be able to undertake other duties. But if the player of Hamlet, for instance, was confined to that character, it was still competent for the representative of "the ghost of buried Denmark" to figure also as Laertes; or for Polonius, his death accomplished, to reappear in the guise of Osric or the First Gravedigger; to say nothing of such minor arrangements as were involved in entrusting the parts of the First Actor, Marcellus, and the Second Gravedigger to one actor. Some care had to be exercised that the doubled characters did not clash, and were not required to be simultaneously present upon the scene. But, indeed, the strollers did not hesitate to mangle their author when his stage directions did not accord with their convenience. The late Mr. Meadows used to relate that when in early life he was a member of the Tamworth, Stratford-upon-Avon, and Warwick company, he was cast for Orozembo, the Old Blind Man, and the Sentinel in Pizarro, and took part in a mutilated version of Macbeth, in which King Duncan, Hecate, the First Murderer, and the Doctor were performed by one actor; the bleeding soldier, one of the apparitions, and Seyton by another; and Fleance, the Apparition of a crowned head, and the Gentlewoman by the juvenile

lady of the company, the characters of Donaldbain and Siward being wholly omitted.

Harley's first theatrical engagement was with Jerrold, the manager of a company at Cranbrook. His salary was fifteen shillings a week, and in a representation of “The Honeymoon” he appeared as Jaques, Lampedo, and Lopez, accomplishing the task with the assistance of several wigs and cloaks. In “John Bull” he played Dan, John Burr, and Sir Francis Rochdale; another actor doubling the parts of Peregrine and Tom Shuffleton, while the manager's wife represented Mrs. Brulgrud-dery and Frank Rochdale, attiring the latter in a pair of very loose nankeen trousers and a very tight short jacket. The entire company consisted of “four white males, three females, and a negro.” Certain of the parts were assigned in the playbills to a Mr. Jones. These, much to his surprise, Harley was requested by the manager to assume. “Between you and me,” he whispered mysteriously to his young recruit, “there's no such person as Mr. Jones. Our company's rather thin just now, but there's no reason why the fact should be noised abroad.” Other provincial managers were much less anxious to conceal the paucity of their company. A country playbill, bearing date 1807, seems indeed to vaunt the system of doubling to which the *impresario* had been driven. The comedy of “The Busy

Body" was announced for performance with the following extraordinary cast :

Sir Francis Gripe and Charles	...	...	Mr. Johnston.
Sir George Airy and Whisper	...	...	Mr. Deans.
Sir Jealous Traffic and Marplot	...	...	Mr. Jones.
Miranda and Scentwell	...	...	Mrs. Deans.
Patch and Isabinda	...	...	Mrs. Jones.

Among other feats of doubling or trebling may be counted the performance, on the same night, by a Mrs. Stanley, at the Coburg Theatre, of the parts of Lady Anne, Tressell, and Richmond, in "Richard III." A Mr. W. Rede once accomplished the difficult feat of appearing as Sir Lucius O'Trigger, Fag, and Mrs. Malaprop in a representation of "The Rivals," the lady's entrance in the last scene having been preceded by the abrupt exit of Sir Lucius and the omission of the concluding passages of his part. The characters of King Henry, Buckingham, and Richmond, in Cibber's edition of "Richard III.," have frequently been undertaken by one performer.

Actors have often appeared in two, and sometimes in three theatres on the same evening. This may be the result of their own great popularity, or due to the fact of their serving a manager who has become lessee of more than one establishment. For twenty-eight nights in succession, Grimaldi performed the arduous duties of clown both at Sadler's Wells and Covent Garden Theatres. On one occasion he even played clown at the Surrey Theatre in addition. It is recorded that "the only

refreshment he took during the whole evening was one glass of warm ale and a biscuit.” A postchaise and four was waiting at the Surrey Theatre to convey him to Sadler’s Wells, and thence to Covent Garden, and the post-boys urged their horses to a furious speed. It is well known that while fulfilling his double engagement he one wet night missed his coach, and ran in the rain all the way from Clerkenwell to Holborn, in his clown’s dress, before he could obtain a second vehicle. He was recognised as he ran by a man who shouted, “Here’s Joe Grimaldi!” And forthwith the most thoroughly popular performer of his day was followed by a roaring and cheering mob of admirers, who proclaimed his name and calling, threw up their hats and caps, exhibited every evidence of delight, and agreed, as with one accord, to see him safe and sound to his journey’s end. “So the coach went on, surrounded by the dirtiest body-guard that was ever beheld, not one of whom deserted his post until Grimaldi had been safely deposited at the stage-door of Covent Garden, when, after raising a vociferous cheer, such of them as had money rushed round to the gallery doors, and making their appearance in the front just as he came on the stage, set up a boisterous shout of ‘Here he is again!’ and cheered him enthusiastically, to the infinite amusement of every person in the theatre who had got wind of the story.”

At one time Elliston, engaged as an actor at Drury Lane, had the additional responsibility of two theatrical managements, the Surrey and the Olympic. His performers were required to serve both theatres, and thus frequently appeared upon the stage in two counties upon the same night. In 1834, the two patent theatres were ruled by one lessee, whose managerial scheme it was to work the two houses with a company and a half. The running to and from Drury Lane and Covent Garden of actors half attired, with rouged faces, and loaded with the paraphernalia of their art, of dancers in various stages of dress, of musicians bearing their instruments and their music-books, was incessant, while the interchange of mysterious terms and inquiries, such as "Who's on?" "Stage waits," "Curtain down," "Rung up," "First music," &c., was sufficiently perplexing to passers-by. At the season of Christmas, when the system of double duty was at its height, the hardships endured by the performers were severe indeed. The dancers were said to pass from one theatre to the other six times during the evening, and to undergo no fewer than eight changes of costume.

In the same way the performances at the summer theatre, the Haymarket, at the commencement and close of its season, often came into collision with the entertainments of the winter houses, and the actor engaged by two

masters, and anxious to serve both faithfully, had a very arduous time of it. How could he possibly be present at the Haymarket and yet not absent from Drury Lane or Covent Garden ? As a rule the patent theatres had the preference, and the summer theatre was compelled for a few nights to be content with a very scanty company. On one occasion, however, Farley, the actor, achieved the feat of appearing both at the Haymarket and Covent Garden on the same night, and in the plays presented first at each house. The effort is deserving of particular description.

At Covent Garden the curtain rose at half-past six o'clock. In the Haymarket the representation commenced at seven. At the former theatre Farley was cast for one of the witches in "Macbeth." At the latter he was required to impersonate Sir Philip Modelove, in the comedy of "A Bold Stroke for a Wife." It was a question of fitting in his exits at Covent Garden with his entrances at the Haymarket. A hackney-coach was in attendance, provided with a dresser, lighted candles, the necessary change of costume, and the means of altering his make-up. His early duties as a witch at Covent Garden fulfilled, the actor jumped into his coach, and, with the assistance of his dresser, was promptly changed from the weird sister of the tragedy to the elderly beau of the comedy. He duly arrived at the Haymarket in time to present himself as Sir Philip, whose

first entrance upon the stage is in the second act of the play. This part of his task performed, he hurried again to Covent Garden, being transformed on the road from Sir Philip back again to the weird sister. Again he left the patent theatre, and reached the Haymarket in time to reappear as Sir Philip, on the second entrance of that character in the fifth act of the play. The actor acquitted himself entirely to the satisfaction of his two audiences (who were perhaps hardly aware of the extent of his labours), but with very considerable strain upon his nervous system. For to add to the difficulties of his task, his coachman, indifferent to the counsel that the more haste often signifies the worst speed, turning a corner too sharply, ran his forewheel against a post, and upset coach, actor, dresser, candles, costumes, and all. This untimely accident notwithstanding, the actor, with assistance freely rendered by a friendly crowd, secured another vehicle, and succeeded in accomplishing an exploit that can scarcely be paralleled in histrionic records.

But if doubling was sometimes a matter of necessity, it has often been the result of choice. Actors have been much inclined to undertake dual duty with a view of manifesting their versatility, or of surprising their admirers. Benefit nights have been especially the occasions of doubling of this kind. Thus, at a provincial theatre, then under his management,

Elliston once tried the strange experiment of sustaining the characters of both Richard and Richmond in the same drama. The entrance of Richmond does not occur until the fifth act of the tragedy, when the scenes in which the king and the earl occupy the stage become alternate. On making his exit as Richard, Elliston dropped his hump from his shoulder, as though it had been a knapsack, straightened his deformed limbs, slipped on certain pieces of pasteboard armour, and, adorned with fresh head-gear, duly presented himself as the Tudor prince. The heroic lines of Richmond delivered, the actor hurried to the side-wings, to resume something of the misshapen aspect of Richard, and then re-enter as that character. In this way the play went on until the last scene, when the combatants came face to face. How was their fight to be presented to the spectators? The omission of so popular an incident as a broadsword combat could not be thought of. The armour of Richmond was forthwith shifted on to the shoulders of a supernumerary player, who was simply enjoined to “hold his tongue, and fight like the devil.” Richard slain, Richmond departed. The body of the dead king was borne from the stage, and Elliston was then enabled to reappear as Richmond, and speak the closing lines of the play.

Among more legitimate exploits in the way of doubling are to be accounted Mr.

Charles Mathews's assumption of the two characters of Puff and Sir Fretful Plagiary in "The Critic;" Mr. Phelps's appearance as James the First and Trapbois, in the play founded upon "The Fortunes of Nigel;" and the rendering by the same actor of the parts of the King and Justice Shallow in "The Second Part of Henry IV." The worst that can be said for these performances is that they incline the audience to pay less heed to the play than to the frequent changes of appearance entailed upon the players. The business of the scene is apt to be overlooked, and regard wanders involuntarily to the transactions of the tiring-room and the side-wings. Will the actor be recognisable? will he really have time to alter his costume? the spectators mechanically ask themselves, and meditation is occupied with such possibilities as a tangled string or an obstinate button hindering the performer. All this is opposed to the real purpose of playing, and injurious to the actor's art, to say nothing of the interests of the dramatist. Illusion is the special object of the theatre, and this forfeits its magic when once inquiry is directed too curiously to its method of contrivance. Still, doubling of this kind has always been in favour both with actors and audiences, and many plays have been provided especially to give dual occupation to the performers. Certain of these have for excuse the fact that their fables hinge upon some question

of mistaken identity, or strong personal resemblance. The famous “Courier of Lyons,” founded, indeed, upon a genuine *cause célèbre*, was a drama of this kind. Here it was indispensable that the respectable Monsieur Lesurques and the criminal Dubosc, between whom so extraordinary a likeness existed that the one suffered death upon the scaffold for a murder committed by the other, should be both impersonated by the same performer. “The Corsican Brothers,” it need hardly be said, narrated the fortunes of the twin-born Louis and Fabian dei Franchi, reasonably supposed to be so much alike that they could not be known apart. Mademoiselle Rachel appeared with success in a drama called “Valeria,” written by Messieurs Auguste Maquet and Jules Lacroix, for the express purpose, it would seem, of rehabilitating the Empress Messalina. The actress personated Valeria, otherwise Messalina, and also Cynisca, a dancing-girl of evil character, but so closely resembling the empress that, as the dramatists argued, history had confounded the two ladies, and charged the one with the misdeeds of the other. “Like and Unlike,” an adaptation from the French, in which some years since Madame Celeste was wont to perform at the Adelphi, is also a drama of the same class. But, indeed, works contrived for doubling purposes are numerous enough. And in this category may be included the elaborate

melodramas which deal with long lapses of years, and relate the adventures of more than one generation, and in which the hero or heroine of the earlier scenes reappears at a later stage of the performance as his or her own child. Here, however, frequent change of dress is not required; the character first personated, when once laid aside, is not resumed, but is supposed to have been effectually removed from the scene by death, generally of a violent description. It is to be added that the applause often won by the actor who doubles a part on account of his rapid changes of attire, are in truth due much less to him than to the activity of his dresser—a functionary, however, who is never seen by the public. Still, calls before the curtain have now become such common compliments that even the dressers of the theatre may yet obtain this form of recognition of their deserts.

The services of a mute double to assist the illusion of the scene, or to spare a leading performer needless fatigue, have often been required upon the stage. Such a play as "The Corsican Brothers" could scarcely be presented without the aid of a mute player to take the place, now of Louis, now of Fabian dei Franchi, to personate now the spectre of this twin, now of that. In former days, when the deepest tragedy was the most highly esteemed of theatrical entertainments, funeral processions, or biers bearing the corpses of departed

heroes, were among the most usual of scenic exhibitions. Plays closed with a surprising list of killed and wounded. But four of the characters in Rowe's "Fair Penitent" are left alive at the fall of the curtain, and among those survivors are included such subordinate persons as Rossano, the friend of Lothario, and Lucilla, the confidante of Calista, whom certainly it was worth no one's while to put to death. The haughty gallant, gay Lothario, is slain at the close of the fourth act, but his corpse figures prominently in the concluding scenes. The stage direction runs at the opening of the fifth act: "A room hung with black; on one side Lothario's body on a bier; on the other a table with a skull and other bones, a book and a lamp on it. Calista is discovered on a couch, in black; her hair hanging loose and disordered. Soft music plays." In this, as in similar cases, it was clearly unnecessary that the personator of the live Lothario of the first four acts should remain upon the stage to represent his dead body in the fifth. It was usual, therefore, to allow the actor's dresser to perform this doleful duty, and the dressers of the time seem to have claimed occupation of this nature as a kind of privilege, probably obtaining in such wise some title to increase of salary. The original Lothario—the tragedy being first represented in 1703—was George Powell, an esteemed actor who won applause from Addison and Steele, but

who appears to have been somewhat of a toper, and was generally reputed to obscure his faculties by incessant indulgence in Nantes brandy. The fourth act of the play over, the actor was impatient to be gone, and was heard behind the scenes angrily demanding the assistance of Warren, his dresser, entirely forgetful of the fact that his attendant was employed upon the stage in personating the corpse of Lothario. Mr. Powell's wrath grew more and more intense. He threatened the absent Warren with the severest of punishments. The unhappy dresser, reclining on Lothario's bier, could not but overhear his raging master, yet for some time his fears were surmounted by his sense of dramatic propriety. He lay and shivered, longing for the fall of the curtain. At length his situation became quite unendurable. Powell was threatening to break every bone in his skin. In his dresser's opinion the actor was a man likely to keep his word. With a cry of "Here I am, master!" Warren sprung up, clothed in sable draperies which were fastened to the handles of his bier. The house roared with surprise and laughter. Encumbered by his charnel-house trappings, the dead Lothario precipitately fled from the stage. The play, of course, ended abruptly. For once the sombre tragedy of "The Fair Penitent" was permitted a mirthful conclusion.

Whenever unusual physical exertion is required of a player, a perilous fall, or a desperate

leap, a trained gymnast is usually engaged as double to accomplish this portion of the performance. When in the stage versions of "Kenilworth," Sir Richard Varney, in lieu of Amy Robsart, is seen to descend through the treacherous trap and incur a fall of many feet, we may be sure that it is not the genuine Varney, but his double who undergoes this severe fate. The name of the double is not recorded in the playbill, however, and he wins little fame, let him acquit himself as skilfully as he may. Occasionally, however, doubles of this kind are found to emerge from obscurity and establish a reputation of their own. In 1820, a pantomime, dealing with the fairy tale of "Jack and the Beanstalk," was produced at Drury Lane. The part of the hero was allotted to little Miss Povey, who declined, however, to undertake Jack's feat of climbing the famous beanstalk, a formidable structure reaching from the stage to the roof of the theatre. It became necessary to secure a substitute who should present some resemblance to the small and slight figure of the young actress, and yet be sufficiently strong and courageous to undertake the task she demurred to. The matter was one of some difficulty, and for some time no competent double was forthcoming. One morning, however, Winston, the stage-manager, despaired a little active boy, acting as waterman's assistant, at the hackney-coach

stand in Bedford Street, Covent Garden. He was carried to the theatre and his abilities put to the test at a rehearsal of the pantomime. His performance was pronounced satisfactory. He nightly appeared during the run of "Jack and the Beanstalk" as the climbing double of Miss Povey. Subsequently, he became one of the pupils of the clown. The boy said he believed his name was Sullivan. Years afterwards he was known to fame as Monsieur Silvain, ballet-master, and principal dancer of the Académie Royale, Paris, an artist of distinction, and a most respectable member of society.

Mrs. Mowatt, the American actress, has recorded in her *Memoirs* a curious instance of a double being employed in connection with a dummy to secure a theatrical illusion of a special kind. The play produced at the Olympic Theatre some twenty years ago, was an English version of the "Ariâne" of Thomas Corneille. In the original, Ariadne, upon the discovery of the perfidy of Theseus, falls upon a sword and expires. This catastrophe was altered in the adaptation, and a startling effect produced by the leaping of the heroine from a rock, and her plunging into the sea, while the ship of Theseus is seen departing in the distance. It was found necessary that three Ariadnes, similarly costumed, and identical in appearance, should lend their aid to accomplish this thrilling termination. Mrs.

Mowatt, as Ariadne the first, paced the shore, and received the agonising intelligence of the desertion of Theseus. A ballet-girl, as Ariadne the second, climbed the rocks of the Island of Naxos, reaching the highest peak to catch the last glimpse of the vanishing vessel. The third Ariadne was a most life-like lay figure, which, on a given signal, was hurled from the cliff, and seen to fall into the abyss below.

The greatest difficulty seems to have been experienced at rehearsal in persuading Ariadne the second even to walk up the steep rocks of Naxos. The poor ballet-girl had been chosen for this duty less because of her courage than on account of an accidental resemblance she bore to Mrs. Mowatt. "She stopped and shrieked half-way, protested she was dizzy, and might fall, and would not advance a step farther. After about half-an-hour's delay, during which the poor girl was encouraged, coaxed, and scolded abundantly, she allowed the carpenter, who had planned the rocky pathway, to lead her carefully up and down the declivity, and finally rushed up alone." At a certain cue she was required to fall upon her face, concealed from the audience by an intercepting rock, and then the lay figure took its flight through the air.

The success of the performance appears to have been complete. The substitution of the double for Ariadne, and the dummy for the double, even puzzled spectators who were

provided with powerful opera-glasses. "The illusion was so perfect," Mrs. Mowatt writes, "that on the first night of the representation, when Ariadne leaped from the rock, a man started up in the pit, exclaiming in a tone of genuine horror, 'Good God! she is killed!'" How this exclamation must have rejoiced the heart of the stage-manager! For one would rather not consider the possibility of the "man in the pit" having been placed there by that functionary with due instructions as to when and what he was to exclaim.

It is a sort of doubling when, in consequence of the illness or absence of a performer, his part is read by some other member of the company. In this way curious experiments have sometimes been made upon public patience. At Dublin, in 1743, Addison's tragedy was announced for representation, with Sheridan, the actor, in the character of Cato. Sheridan, however, suddenly declined to appear, the costume he had usually assumed in his performance of Cato being absent from the wardrobe. In this emergency, Theophilus Cibber submitted a proposition to the audience that, in addition to appearing as Syphax in the play, he should read the part Mr. Sheridan ought to have filled. The offer was accepted, the performance ensued, and apparently excited no opposition. Sheridan was much incensed, however, and published an address to the public. Cibber replied. Sheridan issued a

second address, to which Cibber again responded. Their correspondence was subsequently reprinted in a pamphlet entitled “Sock and Buskin.” But the fact remained that “Cato” had been represented with the chief part not acted, but read by a player who had other duties to fulfil in the tragedy. One is reminded of the old-established story of the play of “Hamlet” being performed with the omission of the character of the Prince of Denmark; a tradition, or a jest, which has long been attributed to Joe Miller, or some similar compiler of *facetiae*. It would seem, however, that even this absurd legend can boast some foundation of fact. At any rate, Mr. Parke, the respectable oboist of the Opera House, who published his *Musical Memoirs* in 1830, is found gravely recording of one Cubit, a subordinate actor and singer of Covent Garden Theatre, that once, “when during one of his summer engagements at a provincial theatre, he was announced to perform the character of Hamlet, he was seized with a sudden and serious illness in his dressing-room, just before the play was going to begin; whereupon the manager, having ‘no more cats than would catch mice,’ was constrained to request the audience to suffer them to go through with the play, omitting the character of Hamlet; which, being complied with, it was afterwards considered by the bulk of the audience to be a great improvement.”

Mr. Parke proceeds to record, by way, perhaps, of fortifying his story, “Although this may appear ridiculous and improbable, an occurrence of a similar kind took place several years afterwards at Covent Garden Theatre, when Cooke, the popular actor, having got drunk, the favourite afterpiece of ‘Love à la Mode’ was performed before a London audience (he being absent) without the principal character, Sir Archy MacSarcasm.” Altogether it may be safe to conclude that very few stories, however absurd, relative to plays and players, can be pronounced absolutely incredible.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### BENEFITS.

PHILIP HENSLOWE, who, late in the sixteenth century, was proprietor of the old Rose Theatre, which stood a little west of the foot of London Bridge, at Bankside, combined with his managerial duties the occupation of pawnbroker, and was employed, moreover, as a kind of commission agent, or middle-man, between dramatic authors and actors. It probably seemed as natural to the manager to engage in these different employments as to require his players to "double" or "treble" parts in plays possessed of an unusually long list of *dramatis personæ*. He had married Agnes Woodward, a widow, whose daughter, Joan, became the first wife of Edward Alleyn, the actor, founder of Dulwich College. Henslowe had been the servant of Mrs. Woodward, and by his union with her he acquired considerable property. Forthwith he constituted himself "a banker of the poor"—to use the

modern euphonious synonym for pawnbroker—and advanced money to all needing it who were able to deposit with him plate, rings, jewels, wearing apparel, or other chattels of value. The playwrights of the time constantly obtained loans from him, not always that he might secure their compositions for his theatre, but often to relieve their immediate wants ; and it is plain that he constantly availed himself of their necessitous condition to effect bargains with them very advantageous to his own interests. Robert Daborne, the dramatist, for instance, appears to have been particularly impecunious, and he was, moreover, afflicted with a pending lawsuit ; the sums he obtained for his plays from the manager were therefore very disproportionate and uncertain. His letters to Henslowe are urgent in solicitations for payment on account of work in hand ; he was often obliged to send his manuscripts piecemeal to the manager, and on one occasion supplied a rough draft of the last scene of a play in order to obtain a few shillings in advance. The amounts paid for new plays at this time were very low. Before 1600 Henslowe never gave more than £8 for a play, but after that date there was a considerable rise in prices. In 1613 Daborne received £20 for his tragedy of " Machiavell and the Devil." In the same year, however, for another play, " The Bellman of London," he was content to take £12 and " the overplus of the second

day." He had demanded £20 in the first instance, but being in great stress for money, had reduced his terms, beseeching Henslowe "to forsake him not in his extremity." Daborne's letters of entreaty indeed expose his poverty in a most pathetic manner, while occasionally they betray amusingly his vanity as an author. In one of his appeals to the manager, he writes : "I did think I deserved as much money as Mr. Massinger ;" but this estimation of himself and his writings has not been confirmed by later ages.

The "overplus of the second day" was probably, as a rule, not very considerable, seeing that a payment of £20 down was regarded as a higher rate of remuneration than £12 and "the overplus," whatever it might produce, in addition. Daborne's needs, however, may have induced him to prize unduly "the bird in the hand." Still his brother authors held similar views on the subject. They, too, disliked the overplus system, while the managers as resolutely favoured it. So that, apart from the consideration that poverty clings to certainty because it cannot afford speculation, and that, to the literary character especially, a present payment of a specified sum is always more precious than possible undefined profits in the future, we may conclude that the overplus system generally told to the advantage of the managers. In the end the labourers had to yield to the capitalists ;

indeed, they could make little stand against them. Authors have never manifested much faculty for harmonious combination, and a literary strike was no more conceivable then than now. In time a chance of the overplus became hardly separable from the method of paying dramatists. It was thought, perhaps, that better works would be produced by the writers, who were made in some sort dependent for profit upon the success of their plays, and partners in the ventures of the managers. In such wise the loss sustained from the condemnation of a play at its first representation would not fall solely upon the manager ; the author would at least be a fellow-sufferer. Gradually the chance of the overplus was deferred from the second to the third performance. The system no doubt varied according to the position of the dramatist, who, if he were a successful writer, could make his own terms, so far as the selection of the overplus night was concerned. Sir John Denham, in the prologue to his tragedy, "The Sophy," acted at Blackfriars about 1642, speaks of the second or third day's overplus as belonging to the poet :

Gentlemen, if you dislike the play,  
Pray make no words on't till the second day  
Or third be passed.

After the Restoration it became a settled practice that what was then called "the author's night," should be the third perform-

ance of his play ; and the dramatist in time received further profit from subsequent representations.

Then grant 'em generous terms who dare to write,  
Since now that seems as dangerous as to fight ;  
If we must yield, yet ere the day be fixt,  
Let us hold out the third, and, if we may, the sixth.  
*Prologue, "The Twin Rivals," Farquhar, produced 1702.*

“ In Dryden's time,” writes Dr. Johnson, explaining that with all his diligence in play-writing the poet could not greatly improve his fortune,\* “ the drama was very far from that universal approbation which it has now obtained. The playhouse was abhorred by the Puritans, and avoided by those who desired the character of seriousness or decency. A grave lawyer would have debased his dignity, and a young trader would have impaired his credit by appearing in those mansions of dissolute licentiousness. The profits of the theatre, when so many classes of the people were deducted from the audience, were not great, and the poet had, for a long time, but a single night. The first that had two nights was Southern ; and the first that had three was Rowe. There were, indeed, in those days, arts of improving a poet's profit, which Dryden forbore to practise ; but a play seldom produced him more than a hundred pounds by the

---

\* He had, it was alleged, entered into a contract to furnish four plays in each year.

accumulated gain of the third night, the dedication, and the copy."

These "arts of improving a poet's profit" consisted in the canvassing his friends and patrons, distributing tickets, and soliciting favour in all quarters. By his address in these matters, Southern's tragedy, "The Spartan Dame," produced him £500; indeed, he is said to have profited more by his writings for the stage than any of his contemporaries. Malone states that Addison was the first to abandon the undignified custom of appealing personally to the public for support. But it has been pointed out that this is an error. Addison gave the profits of "Cato" to the managers, and was not required therefore to appeal on his own behalf to the public. Goldsmith's "Good-natured Man," it may be noted, was played ten consecutive nights, and the third, sixth, and ninth performances were advertised as "appropriated to the author." These three nights produced him £400, and he received £100 more from Griffin, the publisher, for the publication of the play—the entire receipts being immediately, with characteristic promptness, spent in the purchase of the lease of his chambers in Brick Court, Middle Temple, and in handsome furniture, consisting of "Wilton carpets, blue moreen mahogany sofas, blue moreen curtains, chairs corresponding, chimney-glasses, Pembroke and card tables, and tasteful book-shelves." Ac-

cording to Malone, one hundred guineas remained for many years, dating from 1726, the standard price paid by the publishers for a new play.

In addition to these "authors' nights," performances were occasionally given for the benefit of an author suffering from adverse circumstances. Thus, in 1733, a performance was organised at the Haymarket Theatre for the benefit of Mr. Dennis, the critic and dramatist. "The Provoked Husband" was represented, and Pope so far laid aside his resentment against his old antagonist as to supply a prologue for the occasion. Nevertheless, it was noticed that the poet had not been able to resist the temptation of covertly sneering at the superannuated author, and certain of the lines in the prologue were found susceptible of a satirical application. Happily, poor Dennis, protected by his vanity or the decay of his intelligence, perceived nothing of this. Indeed, the poor old critic survived the benefit but twenty days, dying in the seventy-seventh year of his age. Other benefit performances on behalf of distressed men of letters, or their families, have frequently been given, even in quite recent times; but these are not to be confounded with the "authors' nights," as they were originally understood. "Authors' nights," strictly so called, have disappeared of late years. Modern dramatists are content to make private arrangements in

regard to their works with the managers, and do not now publicly advance their personal claims upon the general consideration. They may profit by an "overplus," or be paid by the length of a "run" of their plays, or may sell them outright at once for a stipulated sum. The public have no knowledge of, and no concern in, the conditions of their method of transacting business. But from the old overplus system of the Elizabethan stage resulted those special performances called benefits, still known to the modern playgoer, though now connected in his mind almost altogether with actors, and in no degree with authors. Nevertheless, it was for authors that benefits were originally instituted, in opposition, as we have seen, to their wishes, and solely to suit the convenience and forward the interests of managers such as Mr. Henslowe.

Certainly in Shakespeare's time the actors knew nothing of benefits. They obtained the best price they could for their services, and the risk of profit or loss upon the performance was wholly the affair of the manager. Indeed, it was long after the time when the chance of an overplus had become systematised as a means of paying authors, that it occurred to anyone that actors might also be remunerated in a similar way. In olden days the actor's profession was not favourably regarded by the general public; his social position was par-

ticularly insecure ; he was looked upon as of close kin to the rogue and the vagabond, and with degrading possibilities in connection with the stocks and the whipping-post never wholly remote from his professional career. An Elizabethan player, presuming to submit his personal claims and merits to the consideration of the audience, with a view to his own individual profit, apart from the general company of which he was a member and the manager whom he served, would probably have been deemed guilty of a most unpardonable impertinence. Gradually, however, the status of the actor improved ; people began to concede that he was not necessarily or invariably a mountebank, and that certain of the qualities and dignities of an art might attach now and then to his achievements. The famous Mrs. Barry was, according to Cibber, "the first person whose merit was distinguished by the indulgence of having an annual benefit play, which was granted to her alone," he proceeds, "if I mistake not, first in King James II.'s time, and which became not common to others until the division of the company, after the death of King William's Queen Mary." However, in the preceding reign, in the year 1681, it appears by an agreement made between Davenant, Betterton, and others, that Charles Hart and Edward Kynaston were to be paid "five shillings a-piece for every day there shall be any traged-

dies or comedies or other representations at the Duke's Theatre, in Salisbury Court, or wherever the company shall act during the respective lives of the said Charles Hart and Edward Kynaston, excepting the days the young men or young women play for their own profit only." Benefits would certainly seem to be here referred to, unless we are to understand the performances to be of a commonwealth kind, carried on by the players at their own risk, and independently of the managers. Still, to King James's admiring patronage of Mrs. Barry, the benefit system, as it is at present known to us, has been generally ascribed ; and clearly the monarch's memory deserves to be cherished on this account by our players. He can ill afford to forego the smallest claim to esteem, and undoubtedly he entertained a friendly regard for the stage and its professors. Indeed, the Stuarts generally were well disposed towards the arts, and a decidedly play-going family.

For some years, however, actors' benefits did not extend beyond the case of Mrs. Barry. But in 1695 the patentees of the theatres were so unfortunately situated that they could not satisfy the claims of their actors, and were compelled to pay them "half in good words and half in ready money." Under these circumstances certain of the players compounded for the arrears of salary due to them by taking the risk of benefit performances. After

a season or two these benefits were found to be so advantageous to the actors that they were expressly stipulated for in the agreements with the managers. On the other hand, the managers, jealous of the advantages secured in this wise by the players, took care to charge very fully for the expenses of the house, which were of course deducted from the gross receipts of the benefit night, and further sought to levy a percentage upon the profits obtained by the actors. In 1702 the ordinary charge for house expenses, on the occasion of a benefit at Drury Lane, was about £34. In Garrick's time the charge rose to £64, and was afterwards advanced considerably. Still the actors had special sources of profit. Their admirers and patrons were not content to pay merely the ordinary prices of admission, but bought their tickets at advanced rates, and often sent presents of money in addition. Thus Betterton—whose salary, by-the-bye, was only £4 per week—took a benefit in 1709, when he received £76 for two-thirds of the receipts upon the ordinary scale—one-third being deducted by the manager for expenses—and a further sum of £450 for the extra payments and presents of his friends. The boxes and pit were "laid together," as it was called, and half-a-guinea was charged for admission. "One lady gave him ten guineas, some two, and most one guinea. Further, he delivered tickets for more persons than the

boxes, pit, and stage could hold, and it was thought that he cleared £450 at least over and above the £76." Certainly the great actor enjoyed on this occasion of his benefit what is popularly known as "a bumper."

The system of actors' benefits having thus become thoroughly established, was soon extended and made applicable to other purposes for the most part of a charitable kind. Thus, in 1711, a benefit performance was given in aid of Mrs. Betterton, the widow of the late famous tragedian, who had herself been an actress, but had for some time ceased to appear on the stage owing to age and other infirmities. The "Tatler," after an account of Betterton's funeral, describes feelingly the situation of his widow: "The mention I have here made of Mr. Betterton, for whom I had, as long as I have known anything, a very great esteem and gratitude, for the pleasure he gave me, can do him no good; but it may possibly be of service to the unhappy woman he has left behind him, to have it known that this great tragedian was never in a scene half so moving as the circumstances of his affairs created at his departure. His wife, after a cohabitation of forty years in the strictest amity, has long pined away with a sense of his decay, as well in his person as in his little fortune; and in proportion to that she has herself decayed both in health and reason. Her husband's death, added to her age and

infirmities, would certainly have determined her life, but that the greatness of her distress has been her relief by her present deprivation of her senses. This absence of her reason is her best defence against age, sorrow, poverty, and sickness.”\* Indeed, Steele constantly testifies his fondness for the theatre and kindly feeling towards the players, by calling attention to the benefit performances, and bespeaking the public favour for them, adding much curious mention and humorous criticism of the comedians who were especially the objects of his admiration—Pinkethman, Bullock, Underhill, Dogget, and others.

Other benefits, however, less urgently laid claim to the goodwill of the public. At the theatre in Lincoln’s Inn Fields, in the year 1726, a performance was announced “for the benefit of an author whose play is deferred till next season.” How far the efforts of this anonymous gentleman to raise money upon a sort of contingent reversion of literary distinction were encouraged by the playgoers, or whether his play ever really saw the light of the stage-lamps, can hardly now be discovered: By-and-by performances are given on behalf of objects wholly unconnected with players or playwrights. In 1742 a representation was advertised, “For the entertainment of the Grand Master of the Ancient and Honourable

---

\* The “Tatler,” No. 167, May 4, 1710.

Society of Free and Accepted Masons—for the benefit of a brother who has had great misfortunes." A season or two later there was a benefit at Drury Lane "for a gentleman under misfortunes," when *Othello* was played by an anonymous actor, afterwards to be known to fame as Mr. Samuel Foote. In subsequent years benefits were given "for the sufferers by a late fire;" on behalf of the soldiers who had fought against the Pretender in the year '45; for "Mrs. Elizabeth Forster, the granddaughter of Milton, and his only surviving descendant,"\* when "*Comus*" was performed, and a new prologue, written by Dr. Johnson, was spoken by Garrick; for "the Lying-in Hospital in Brownlow Street;" while in the success of the production of Dr. Young's tragedy of "*The Brothers*," played at Drury Lane in 1753, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel was directly concerned—the author having announced that the profits would be given in aid of that charity. Nevertheless, the receipts disappointed expectation; whereupon the author generously, out of his own resources, made up the sum to £1,000. A special epilogue was written for the occasion by Mallet at Garrick's request; but this was so coarsely worded, and so broadly delivered by Mrs. Clive, that Dr.

---

\* The lady is said to have been so little acquainted with diversion or gaiety, that she did not know what was intended when a benefit was offered her. Praiseworthy efforts were made in her interest, but the performance only produced £130.

Young took offence, and would not suffer the lines to be printed with his play.

Among the curiosities of benefits may be recorded a performance that took place at Drury Lane in 1744 on behalf of Dr. Clancy, the author of one or two plays, who published his memoirs in Dublin in 1750. Dr. Clancy was blind, and the playbill was headed with the line from Milton, "The day returns, but not to me returns." The play was "Œdipus," and the part of Tiresias, the blind prophet, was undertaken by Dr. Clancy. The advertisements expressed a hope that "as this will be the first instance of any person labouring under so heavy a deprivation performing on the stage, the novelty as well as the unhappiness of his case will engage the favour and protection of a British audience." The performance, which must certainly have been of a painful kind, attracted a very numerous audience; and the fact may be regarded as proof that an appetite for what is now designated "the sensational" was not wholly unknown to the playgoers of the last century. It does not appear that Dr. Clancy's representation of the blind prophet was repeated, nor is it stated that as a histrionic effort it was particularly distinguished. It was enough perhaps that the part was played by a man who was really blind, instead of by one merely simulating blindness. Ultimately Dr. Clancy's case moved the pity of George II.,

and he was awarded during his life a pension of £40 a year from the privy purse.

Other authors have from time to time appeared on the stage, to speak prologues, or to sustain complete characters; for instance, Tom Durfey, Otway, Farquhar, Savage, Murphy, and, to jump to later days, Sheridan Knowles. Their appearances, however, cannot be simply connected with benefits. In many cases they, no doubt, contemplated the adoption of the stage as a profession, though, as a rule, it must be said success was denied them in such respect. They played on their benefit nights, of course, but their performances were not limited to those occasions.

It is not to be supposed that a benefit could be taken by an actor, or, at an earlier date, by an author, without his incurring much trouble in regard to preliminary arrangements. The mere issue of a list of entertainments, however attractive, was by no means sufficient. He was required to call at the houses of his patrons and friends personally to solicit their support on the occasion and to pay his respects to them. Any failure of attention on his part in this matter he was bound to make the subject of public explanation and apology. It must be remembered that the playgoers of a century ago were rather a family than a people. They were limited in number, returned to the theatre night after night, naturally demanding that

---

constant change of programme which so distinguished the old stage, and has been so completely omitted from modern theatrical arrangements, and were almost personally known to the actors. This, of course, only refers to the visitors to the pit and boxes; the galleries were always presumed to be occupied by footmen and apprentices, and persons of no consideration whatever, while stalls were not yet in existence. Strangers from the country were few—those from foreign parts fewer still. The theatre was regarded, as it were, from a household point of view; was in some sort supplementary to a man's home, and he therefore considered himself entitled to be heard and to take a personal interest in regard to its concerns and proceedings. Necessarily this feeling diminished as London grew in size and the audience increased in numbers, and finally became impossible. An actor knew at last his admirers only in the mass; while they lost inevitably all individual and private interest in his success. But long after the London players had ceased to make calls and to solicit patronage for their benefits, the practice still obtained in the provinces, and could on no account be abandoned. Thus, in early life, when a member of the country company of which her father, Roger Kemble, was manager, the great Mrs. Siddons has been seen, as a contemporary writer describes, "walking up

and down both sides of a street in a provincial town, dressed in a red woollen cloak, such as was formerly worn by menial servants, and knocking at each door to deliver the playbill of her benefit." And to come to a later instance, the reader may bear in mind that before that ornament of Mr. Crummles's company, Miss Snellici, took her benefit or "bespeak" at the Portsmouth Theatre, she, in company with Nicholas Nickleby, and for propriety's sake, the Infant Phenomenon, canvassed her patrons in the town, and sold tickets to Mr. and Mrs. Curdle, Mrs. Borum, and others.

In pursuance of this principle, we find a notice in the bill for Mr. Bickerstaff's benefit, at Drury Lane, in May, 1723 : "Bickerstaff being confined to his bed by his lameness, and his wife lying now dead, has nobody to wait on the quality and his friends for him, but hopes they'll favour him with their appearance." And when, just before Mr. Ryan's benefit at Covent Garden in 1735, he had been attacked by a footpad and seriously injured—several of his teeth having been shot out, and his face and jawbone much shattered—he addressed a letter in *The Daily Post* to his friends, in which he stated the uncertainty of his being ever able to appear on the stage again, and expressed his hopes "that they would excuse his not making a personal application to them." So again, on the occasion of

Mr. Chapman's benefit, in 1739, there appears in the playbill an announcement : "N.B.—I being in danger of losing one of my eyes, and advised to keep it from the air, therefore stir not out to attend my business at the theatre. On this melancholy occasion I hope my friends will be so indulgent as to send for tickets to my house, the corner of Bow Street, Covent Garden, which favour will be gratefully acknowledged by their obedient humble servant, THOMAS CHAPMAN." The excuses set forth in these announcements appear to be very sufficient, and no doubt were so regarded by the patrons in each case, while at the same time they demonstrate the conduct required ordinarily of persons anxious for public support on the occasion of their benefits. Excuses of a lighter kind, however, seem frequently to have been held adequate by the players. Mr. Sheridan, the actor, notifies in 1745 that, "as his benefit was not appointed till last Friday, he humbly hopes that such ladies and gentlemen as he shall omit to wait on will impute it rather to a want of time than to a want of respect and knowledge of his duty." And Mr. Yates, who about the same time had migrated from the West-end stage to the humbler theatre in Goodman's Fields, and announced Fielding's "Miser" for his benefit—"the part of Lovegold to be attempted by Mr. Yates after the manner of the late Mr. Griffin"—apologises "for not waiting on ladies

---

Spiller, of Gloucestershire, having received an invitation from Hildebrand Bullock, of Liquor-pond Street, London, to exercise the usual weapons of the noble science of defence, will not fail to meet this bold invader, desiring a full stage, blunt weapons, and from him much favour.” At another time the same actor announced his benefit in a kind of mock electioneering address, requesting the vote and interest of the public on the ground of his being “a person well affected to the establishment of the theatre.” To recite an epilogue while seated on the back of an ass was a favourite expedient of the comedians of the early Georgian period, while the introduction of comic songs and mimicry—such as the scene of “The Drunken Man,” and the song of “The Four-and-Twenty Stock-Jobbers,” which Mr. Harper performed on his benefit night in 1720—was found to be a very attractive measure. Authors who were on friendly terms with the actors, or had reason to be grateful to them, frequently gave them short pieces or wrote special epilogues for their benefits. Sheridan’s farce, “St. Patrick’s Day, or the Scheming Lieutenant,” was a present to Clinch, the actor, and first produced on his benefit night in 1775. Goldsmith felt himself so obliged to Quick and Lee Lewes, who had been the original Tony Lumpkin and Young Marlow in “She Stoops to Conquer,” that for the one he adapted a farce

from Sedley's translation of "Le Grondeur," and supplied the other with an occasional epilogue, written in his pleasantest manner. When Shuter selected "The Good-natured Man" for his benefit, the gratified author, in a fit of extravagant kindness, sent the actor ten guineas—possibly the last he had at the time—for a box ticket.

On the occasion of his first benefit in London, Garrick furnished his patrons with a remarkable proof of his versatility, for he represented extreme age in "King Lear," and extreme youth in the comedy of "The Schoolboy." At his second benefit he again contrasted his efforts in tragedy and comedy by appearing as Hastings in "Jane Shore," and Sharp in the farce of "The Lying Valet." Kean, for his benefit, danced as harlequin, gave imitations of contemporary performers, and sang the songs of Tom Tug after the manner of Mr. Incledon. Other actors of very inferior capacity made similar experiments, the fact that the performance was "for a benefit," and "for one night only," being esteemed in every case a sufficient justification of any eccentricity.

It would be hopeless to attempt any detailed account of the many strange deeds done for the sake of benefits. Actresses have encroached upon the repertory of their male playfellows, as when Mrs. Woffington appeared as Lothario, Mrs. Abington as Scrub, Mrs.

---

Siddons as Hamlet, and when portly Mrs. Webb attempted the character of Falstaff. Actors have laid hands on characters which usually were deemed the exclusive property of the actresses—as when Mr. Dowton resigned his favourite part of Sir Anthony Absolute and donned the guise of Mrs. Malaprop. The Kemble's have sought to make their solemn airs and sepulchral tones available in the reckless scenes and hilarious utterances of farce—and exuberant comedians of the Keeley and Liston pattern have ventured to tincture with whimsicality the woes of tragedy. To draw a crowded house and bring money to the treasury was the only aim. Benefits, in fact, followed the argument of the old drinking song—merriment at all costs to-night, and sobriety, somehow, on the morrow—until the benefit season came round again, and then—*da capo!*

## CHAPTER IX.

### THUNDERS OF APPLAUSE.

ADDISON devotes a number of the "Spectator" to a description of "The Trunkmaker in the Upper Gallery"—a certain person so called, who had been observed to frequent, during some years, that portion of the theatre, and to express his approval of the transactions of the stage by loud knocks upon the benches or the wainscot, audible over the whole house. It was doubtful how he came to be called the Trunkmaker: whether from his blows, resembling those often given with a hammer in the shops of such artisans, or from a belief that he was a genuine trunkmaker, who, upon the conclusion of his day's work, repaired to unbend and refresh his mind at the theatre, carrying in his hand one of the implements of his craft. Some, it is alleged, were foolish enough to imagine him a perturbed spirit haunting the upper gallery, and noted that he made more noise than ordinary whenever the Ghost in "Hamlet"

---

appeared upon the scene; some reported that the trunkmaker was, in truth, dumb, and had chosen this method of expressing his content with all he saw or heard; while others maintained him to be "the playhouse thunderer," voluntarily employing himself in the gallery when not required to discharge the duties of his office upon the roof of the building. The "Spectator," holding that public shows and diversions lie well within his province, and that it is particularly incumbent upon him to notice everything remarkable touching the elegant entertainments of the theatre, makes it his business to obtain the best information he can in regard to this trunkmaker, and finds him to be "a large black man whom nobody knows;" who "generally leans forward on a huge oaken plant," attending closely to all that is occurring upon the stage; who is never seen to smile, but who, upon hearing anything that pleases him, takes up his staff with both hands, and lays it upon the next piece of timber that stands in his way, with exceeding vehemence; after which, he composes himself to his former posture, till such time as something new sets him again at work. Further, it was observed of him, that his blows were so well timed as to satisfy the most judicious critics. Upon the expression of any shining thought of the poet, or the exhibition of any uncommon grace by the actor, the trunkmaker's blow falls upon bench or wainscot. If

the audience fail to concur with him, he smites a second time, when, if the audience still remain unroused, he looks round him with great wrath and administers a third blow, which never fails to produce the desired effect. Occasionally, however, he is said to permit the audience to begin the applause of their own motion, and at the conclusion of the proceeding ratifies their conduct by a single thwack.

It was admitted that the trunkmaker had rendered important service to the theatre, insomuch that, upon his failing to attend at his post by reason of serious illness, the manager employed a substitute to officiate in his stead, until such time as his health was restored to him. The incompetence of the deputy, however, became too manifest ; though he laid about him with incredible violence, he did it in such wrong places, that the audience soon discovered he was not their old friend the real trunkmaker. With the players the trunkmaker was naturally a favourite ; they not only connived at his obstreperous approbation, but cheerfully repaid such damage as his blows occasioned. That he had saved many a play from condemnation, and brought fame to many a performer, was agreed upon all hands. The audience are described as looking abashed if they find themselves betrayed into plaudits in which their friend in the upper gallery takes no part ; and the actors

are said to regard such favours as mere *brutum fulmen*, or empty noise, when unaccompanied by “the sound of the oaken plant.” Still, the trunkmaker had his enemies, who insinuated that he could be bribed in the interest of a bad poet or a vicious player ; such surmises, however, the “Spectator” averred to be wholly without foundation, upholding the justice of his strokes and the reasonableness of his admonitions. “He does not deal about his blows at random, but always hits the right nail upon the head. The inexpressible force wherewith he lays them on sufficiently shows the strength of his convictions. His zeal for a good author is indeed outrageous, and breaks down every fence and partition, every board and plank, that stands within the expression of his applause.”

Moreover, the “Spectator” insists upon the value and importance to an audience of a functionary thus presiding over them like the director of a concert, in order to awaken their attention, and beat time to their applauses ; or, “to raise my simile,” Addison continues, “I have sometimes fancied the trunkmaker in the upper gallery to be, like Virgil’s ruler of the winds, seated upon the top of a mountain, who, when he struck his sceptre upon the side of it, ‘roused a hurricane and set the whole cavern in an uproar.’”

In conclusion, the writer, not caring to confine himself to barren speculations or to reports

of pure matter of fact, without deriving therefrom something of advantage to his countrymen, takes the liberty of proposing that upon the demise of the trunkmaker, or upon his losing "the spring of his arm" by sickness, old age, infirmity, or the like, some able-bodied critic should be advanced to his post, with a competent salary, and a supply, at the public expense, of bamboos for operas, crab-tree cudgels for comedies, and oaken plants for tragedies. "And to the end that this place should be always disposed of according to merit, I would have none preferred to it who has not given convincing proofs both of a sound judgment and a strong arm, and who could not upon occasion either knock down an ox, or write a comment upon Horace's 'Art of Poetry.' In short, I would have him a due composition of Hercules and Apollo, and so rightly qualified for this important office that the trunkmaker may not be missed by our posterity."

Addison's paper doubtless possessed an element of fact and truth, enriched by the fancifulness peculiar to the writer. It was his manner thus to embroider commonplace; to enhance the actual by large additions of the ideal. There probably existed such a personage as the trunkmaker; some visitor to the upper gallery was in the habit of expressing approval by strokes of his cudgel upon the wainscot; and his frequent presence had obtained the

recognition of the other patrons of the theatre. It was an easy and a pleasant task to Addison to invest this upper-gallery visitor with special critical qualities, to attribute to his "oaken plant" almost supernatural powers. In any case, the trunkmaker was a sort of foreshadowing of the *claqueur*. It was reserved for later times to organise applause and reduce success to a system. Of old, houses were sometimes "packed" by an author's friends to ensure a favourable result to the first representation of his play. When, for instance, Addison's "Cato" was first produced, Steele, as himself relates, undertook to pack an audience, and accordingly filled the pit with frequenters of the Whig coffee-houses, with students from the Inns of Court, and other zealous partisans. "This," says Pope, "had been tried for the first time in favour of 'The Distressed Mother' (by Ambrose Phillips), and was now, with more efficacy, practised for 'Cato.'" But this was only an occasional *claque*. The "band of applauders" dispersed after they had cheered their friend, and achieved their utmost to secure the triumph of his play. And they were unconnected with the manager of the theatre; they were not *his* friends; still less were they his servants, receiving wages for their labours, and bound to raise their voices and clap their hands in accordance with his directions. For such are the genuine *claqueurs* of to-day.

---

Dr. Véron, who has left upon record a sort of secret history of his management of the Paris Opera House, has revealed many curious particulars concerning *les claqueurs*, adding a serious defence of the system of artificial applause. The artistic nature, the doctor maintains, submitting its merits to the judgment of the general public, has great need of the exhilaration afforded by evidence of hearty approval and sympathy ; the singer and the dancer are thus inspired with the courage absolutely necessary to the accomplishment of their professional feats ; and it is the doctor's experience that whenever a song or a dance has been redemanded by the audience, the dance has been better danced, and the song better sung, the second time of performance than the first. Hence there is nothing harmful, but rather something beneficial, in the proceedings of *les claqueurs*. Every work produced at the theatre cannot be of the first class, and legitimately rouse the enthusiasm of the public ; every dramatic or lyrical artist cannot invariably, by sheer force of talent, overcome the coldness, the languor, or the indifference of an audience ; yet the general effect of the representation would suffer much if all applause, including that of a premeditated and, indeed, purchased kind, were entirely withheld ; the timid would remain timid, talent would remain unrecognised, and, therefore, almost unrevealed, if no cheering were

heard to reassure, to encourage, to kindle, and excite. The suggestion that the public would supply genuine applause if only the *claqueurs* were less liberal with the spurious article, Dr. Véron rather evades than discusses.

The chief of the *claqueurs* in Dr. Véron's time was a certain M. Auguste, of Herculean form and imposing address, well suited in every respect for the important post he filled. He was inclined to costume of very decisive colours—to coats of bright green or reddish-brown—presumably that, like a general officer, his forces might perceive his presence in their midst by the peculiarity, if not the brilliance, of his method of dress. Auguste was without education—did not know a note of music ; but he understood the audience of the Opera House. For long years he had attended every representation upon its stage, and experience had made him a most skilful tactician. Auguste enjoyed the complete confidence of Dr. Véron. *Claqueur* and manager attended together the rehearsals of every new work, and upon the eve of its first performance held a cabinet council upon the subject. They reviewed the whole production from the first line to the last. “I did not press upon him my opinions,” says Dr. Véron ; “I listened to his ; he appraised, he judged all, both dance and song, according to his own personal impressions.” The manager was surprised at the justice of the *claqueur's* criticism by anticipation—at his ingenious

plans for apportioning and graduating the applause. It was Auguste's principle of action to begin modestly and discreetly, especially at the opera, dealing with a choice and critical public ; to approve a first act but moderately, reserving all salvoes of applause for the last act and the *dénouement* of the performance. Thus, in the last act he would bestow three rounds of applause upon a song, to which, had it occurred in the first act, he would have given but one. He held that towards the middle of a performance success should be quietly fostered, but never forced. For the *claqueurs* of other theatres Auguste entertained a sort of disdain. It was, as he averred, the easiest thing in the world to obtain success at the Opéra Comique, or the Vaudeville. The thing was managed there not so much by applause as by laughter. There was the less need for careful management ; the less risk of vexing the public by injudicious approbation. No one could take offence at a man for laughing immoderately ; he was not chargeable with disingenuousness, as in the case of one applauding to excess. Occasionally cries were raised of "*A la porte les claqueurs* ;" but such a cry as "*A la porte les rieurs*," had never been heard. At the Opera House, however, there was no occupation for laughers ; in the score of an opera, or in the plot of a ballet, appeal was never made to a sense of the mirthful. Then the opera

public was of a susceptible, and even irritable nature ; it might be led, but it could scarcely be driven ; it could be influenced by polite and gentle means ; it would resent active interference, and “a scene” might ensue—even something of a disturbance. But M. Auguste implored his manager to be easy on that score. Nothing of the kind should happen ; he would prove himself deserving, worthy of his employer’s confidence. “Only,” said M. Auguste, “those fools, the paying public, certainly give us a great deal of trouble !”

The *chef de la claque* was, of course, supplied with admission tickets by the management, and these were issued according to an established scale. If the success of a work, already represented many times, showed signs of flagging, and needed to be sustained, Auguste received some forty or fifty pit tickets ; but in the case of a work highly approved by the public, and still attracting good houses, twenty, or even ten, tickets were held to be sufficient. But on the first production of an entirely new entertainment, at least a hundred tickets were handed to Auguste. There was then a meeting of the *claqueurs* at some appointed place—usually a wine-shop in the neighbourhood of the theatre—and the plan of action was arranged, the army of applauders organised and marshalled. Intelligent lieutenants, about ten in number, each in command of a detachment of the forces, were instructed how to

deal with opponents, and to keep watchful eyes upon the proceedings of their chief. In addition to a money payment and their own entrance tickets, they were accorded other tickets to be given only to friends upon whose fidelity they could rely. Certain of the *claqueurs* accepted outpost duty, as it were, and acted in isolated positions ; others, and these the majority, took close order, and fought, so to speak, in column. In addition to his regular forces, Auguste engaged supernumerary and irregular troops, known to him as *sous-claqueurs*, upon whose discipline and docility he could not wholly rely, though he could make them useful by enclosing them in the ranks of his seasoned soldiers. The *sous-claqueurs* were usually well-clothed frequenters and well-wishers of the Opera House, anxious to attend the first representation of the new work to be produced, and willing to pay half-price for their tickets, upon the condition that they placed their applause at the disposal of M. Auguste.

The *claqueurs* were admitted to the theatre and took their seats some time before the entrance of the paying public. M. Auguste had thus ample opportunity of deciding upon his strategic operations, of placing his advance guard, of securing the position of his main army, and of defending its flanks and rear. The paying public thus found itself curiously intermixed and imprisoned by these hosts of

---

*claqueurs*, and victory usually crowned the efforts of M. Auguste, who was careful to arrogate to himself the results of the evening's proceedings. "What a splendid success I achieved!" he would say; completely ignoring the efforts of the composer, the artists of the theatre, and the manager, who were perhaps entitled to some share of the glories of the performance.

Auguste, as Dr. Véron relates, made his fortune at the opera. He was in receipt of annuities from several artists of established fame. Success could hardly be achieved without his aid. The friends, patrons, and family of a new artist, to ensure his or her success, invariably paid court and money to Auguste, the price of his services corresponding with the pretensions of the *débutant*. And then he undertook engagements of an exceptional kind, sometimes even to the prejudice of his manager. Artists required of him sometimes a sudden increase of their success—that, for a few nights only, an extraordinary measure of applause should reward their exertions. Their engagements were expiring or were about to be renewed; it was desirable to deceive both the public and the manager. The vital question of salary was under consideration; an increase of their emoluments was most desirable. So, for a while, the mediocre singer or dancer obtained from Auguste and his auxiliaries unusual favour, and the manager was induced to

form very erroneous opinions upon the subject. Rumours, too, were artfully circulated to the effect that the performer in question had received liberal offers from England or Prussia ; that his or her merits had roused the attention of rival impresarios ; the Parisian manager was cautioned at all costs to retain in his theatre ability and promise so remarkable. But with the signing of a new engagement, at an advance of salary, came disenchantment. M. Auguste's services were now withdrawn, for the performer's object was attained ; and the management for some time to come was saddled with mediocrity, purchased at a high price.

But little difficulties and deceptions of this kind notwithstanding, Dr. Véron approved the *claque* system, and constituted himself the friend and defender of Auguste. It was not only that Auguste was himself a very worthy person—an excellent father of a family, leading a steady and creditable kind of life, putting by, for the benefit of his children, a considerable portion of his large annual earnings as *chef de la claque*—but the advantages of artificial applause and simulated success seemed to Dr. Véron to be quite beyond question, while wholly justifiable by their results. The manager detected the *claque* system as a pervading element in almost all conditions of life. To influence large bodies or assemblies, dexterity and stratagem he declared were

---

indispensably necessary. The applause exacted by Nero, when he recited his verses or played upon the lute, or Tiberius, posing himself as an orator before the senate, was the work of a *claque*, moved thereto rather by terror, however, than by pecuniary considerations. Parliamentary applause he found also to be of an artificial kind, produced by the spirit of friendship or the ties of party; and he relates how, when the *Constitutionnel* newspaper was under his direction, certain leading members attended at the printing-office to correct the proofs of their speeches, and never failed to enliven them at intervals by the addition of such terms as "Cheers," "Loud cheers," "Great cheering," "Sensation," "Excitement," &c. These factitious plaudits, tricks, and manœuvres of players, singers, dancers, and orators, in truth, deceive no one, he maintained; while they make very happy, nevertheless, all those who have recourse to them.

As a manager, therefore, Dr. Véron invariably opposed the efforts made to suppress the *claqueurs* in the pay of the theatre. He admits that sometimes excess of zeal on the part of these hirelings brought about public discontent and complaint; but, upon the whole, he judged that they exercised a beneficial influence, especially in the prevention of cabals or conspiracies against particular artists, and of certain scandals attached to the rivalry and jealousy of performers. And to M. Auguste

he thus addressed himself: " You have a fine part to play ; great duties to perform ; put an end to quarrels ; help the weak against the strong ; never oppose the public ; cease applauding on a hint of their disapproval ; present an example of politeness and decorum ; conciliate and pacify ; above all, prevent all hostile combinations, all unjust coalitions, against the artists on the stage, or the works represented."

Dr. Véron has said, perhaps, all that could be said for the *claque* system ; but his plausible arguments and apologies will not carry conviction to every mind. There can be no doubt of the value, the necessity almost, of applause to the player, but one would much rather that the enthusiasm of an audience was wholly genuine, and not provided at so much a cheer, let us say, by the manager or the player himself. " Players, after all," writes Hazlitt, " have little reason to complain of their hard-earned, short-lived popularity. One thunder of applause from pit, boxes, and gallery is equal to a whole immortality of posthumous fame." But if the thunder is but stage-thunder ? If the applause is supplied to order, through the agency of a M. Auguste ? Upon another occasion Hazlitt expresses more tenderness for the ephemeral glories of the actor's art. " When an author dies it is no matter, for his works remain. When a great actor dies, there is a void produced in society,

a gap which requires to be filled up. The literary amateur may find employment for his time in reading old authors only, and exhaust his entire spleen in scouting new ones ; but the lover of the stage cannot amuse himself in his solitary fastidiousness by sitting to witness a play got up by the departed ghosts of first-rate actors, or be contented with the perusal of a collection of old playbills ; he may extol Garrick, but he must go to see Kean, and, in his own defence, must admire, or at least tolerate, what he sees, or stay away against his will." And Cibber, in his apology, has placed on record an elaborate lament, "that the momentary beauties flowing from an harmonious elocution cannot, like those of poetry, be their own record ; that the animated graces of the actor can live no longer than the instant breath and motion that presents them ; or, at least, can but faintly glimmer through the memory or imperfect attestation of a few surviving spectators."

The complete suspension of applause, genuine or factitious, must result in the exceeding depression of the player. He must feel himself deprived of his proper sustenance ; and something of dismay must possess him, when he finds that all his efforts move his audience in no way ; that they are not *en rapport* with him ; that while he labours they are listless. Henderson committed himself to the exaggeration that no actor could perform well, unless he

was systematically flattered both on and off the stage. Liston, the comedian, found applause, of whatever kind, so absolutely necessary to him that he declared he liked to see even a small dog wag his tail in approbation of his exertions. Mrs. Siddons complained of the inferior measure of applause that she obtained in the theatres of the provinces. At Drury Lane her grand bursts of passion were received with prolonged cheering and excitement, that gave her rest and breathing-time, and prepared her for increased efforts. The playgoers of York were at one time so lukewarm in their reception of popular players, that, at the instance of Woodward, Tate Wilkinson, the manager, called on the chief patrons of the theatre, and informed them that the actor was so mortified by their coolness, that he could not play nearly so well in York as in London, Dublin, and Edinburgh. The York audience benefited by the remonstrance, and on Woodward's next appearance, greatly to his delight, awarded him extraordinary applause.

The system of calling, or recalling, a favourite performer, which now appears to be established in our theatres, is of foreign origin, and was first instituted in London at the Italian Opera House. "It is the highest ambition of the opera-singers—like the Methodists—to have a *call*," says Parke, the oboe-player, in his "*Musical Memoirs*," published in 1830; and he describes the opera season of 1824, when

Rossini was director and composer to the King's Theatre, and his wife, Madame Colbran Rossini, appeared as *prima donna seria*; Madame Pasta and Madame Catalani being also engaged for a limited number of nights. He relates, as something remarkable, that at the fall of the curtain after the performance of Mayer's "Il Fanatico per la Musica," Madame Catalani, "was *called for*, when she again presented herself, making her obeisance, amidst waving of handkerchiefs and tumultuous applause." Madame Pasta, after appearing as Desdemona, "also had a call when the curtain fell, and was brought back to receive the reward due to her distinguished talents." Two seasons later Mr. Parke says, in reference to Madame Pasta's performance of Desdemona: "At the end of the opera, by desire of the audience, she came forward once more to receive that reward which is becoming so common that it will shortly cease to be a mark of distinction." And, two seasons after that, of her appearance in "Tancredi," he writes: "She, *as usual*, delighted the audience; and was, *as usual*, enthusiastically applauded. After the curtain fell she was called for, *as usual*, to go through the ceremony of being unmercifully applauded."

In the non-operatic theatres it is probable that calls first came in vogue when epilogues went out.

The players are called simply to congratulate

---

them on their success, and to express some sort of gratitude for their exertions. There is nothing to be urged against this method of applauding the performers when kept within reasonable bounds. Sometimes, it is to be feared, however, the least discreet of the audience indulge in calls rather for their own gratification—by way of pastime during the interval between one play and another—than out of any strict consideration of the abilities of the players; and, having called on one or two deserving members of a company, proceed to require the presence before the curtain of others who have done little to merit the compliment. Certain playgoers, indeed, appear to applaud no matter what, simply for the sake of applauding. They regard the theatre as a place to be noisy in, and for the vehement expression of their own restless natures. When they cannot greet a player with acclamations, they will clamorously deride a footman, or other servant of the theatre, who appears before the foot-lights with a broom, a watering-pot, a carpet, or other necessary of representation; or they will issue boisterous commands to the gentlemen of the orchestra to "strike up" and afford an interlude of music. To these of the audience it is almost painful that a theatre should be peaceful or a stage vacant; rather than this should happen they would prefer, if it could possibly be contrived, and they were acquainted with his name, that the call-boy or the prompter

should be called for and congratulated upon the valuable aid he had furnished to the performance.

Macready relates in his memoirs that the practice of "calling on" the principal actor was first introduced at Covent Garden Theatre, on the occasion of his first performance of the character of Richard the Third, on October 19th, 1819. "In obedience to the impatient and persevering summons of the house I was desired by Fawcett to go before the curtain ; and accordingly I announced the tragedy for repetition amidst the gratulating shouts that carried the assurance of complete success to my agitated and grateful heart." But while loving applause, as an actor needs must, Macready had little liking for the honours of calls and recalls—heartily disapproving of them, indeed, when they seemed to him in any way to disturb the representation. Thus, of his performance of Werner at Manchester, in 1845, he writes : "Acted very fairly. Called for. *Trash!*!" Under date December 23rd, 1844, he records : "Acted Virginius [in Paris] with much energy and power to a very excited audience. I was loudly called for at the end of the fourth act, but could not or would not make so absurd and empirical a sacrifice of the dignity of my poor art." Three years later he enters in his diary : "Acted King Lear with much care and power, and was received by a

most kind, and sympathetic, and enthusiastic audience. I was called on, the audience trying to make me come on after the first act, but of course I could not think of such a thing." But these "calls" relate to the conclusion of an act, when, at any rate, the drop-scene was fallen, hiding the stage from view, and when for a while there is pause in the performance, suspension of theatrical illusion. What would Macready have said to "calls" in the course of the scene, while the stage is still occupied, with certain of the characters of the drama reduced to lay figures by the conduct of their play-fellows and the public ? Yet in modern times Ophelias, after tripping off insane to find a watery grave, have been summoned back to the stage to acknowledge suavely enough by smiles and curtsies the excessive applause of the spectators, greatly to the perplexity of King Claudius, Queen Gertrude, and Laertes, and seriously to the injury of the poet's design —and this is but a sample of the follies of the modern theatre in this respect.

Such calls, recalls, and imbecile compliments are indeed wholly reprehensible, and should be suppressed as strenuously as possible. The managers of the Theatre Royal at Dresden some few years since forbade the performers to accept calls before the termination of an act, as "the practice interrupted the progress of the action on the stage," and respectfully requested

the audience to abstain from such demands in future. Would that this ordinance had obtained more general obedience.

Writing in 1830, Mr. Parke describes the custom of encoring performers as a prerogative that had been exercised by the public for more than a century; and says, with some justice, that it originated more from self-love in the audience than from gratitude to those who had afforded them pleasure. He considered, however, that encoring had done service upon the whole, by exciting emulation, and stimulating singers to extraordinary exertion; and that though, in many instances, it destroyed the illusion of the scene, it had become so fixed that, in spite even of the burlesque of encoring Lord Grizzle's dying song in Fielding's "Tom Thumb," it continued to prevail as much as ever. He notes it as curious that, "in calling for a repetition, the audiences of the French and English theatres should each have selected a word forming no part of their respective languages—the former making use of the Latin word, *bis*; and the latter the French word, *encore*." Double encores, we gather from the same authority, first occurred in England, at the Opera House, during the season of 1808, when Madame Catalani was compelled to sing three times one of her songs in the comic opera, "La Freschetana." As none of the great singers, her predecessors—Mara, Banti, Grassini, and Billington—had ever received a

similar compliment, this appeared extraordinary, until the fact oozed out that Catalani, as part of her engagement, had stipulated for the privilege of sending into the house fifty orders on each night of her performance. After this discovery double encores ceased for a time at the King's Theatre ; but the system reappeared at Covent Garden, by way of compliment to Braham, each time the great tenor sang the favourite polaca in the opera of "The Cabinet;" and subsequently like honours were paid to Sinclair upon his return from Italy. Until then, it would seem, Mr. Sinclair had been well satisfied with one encore, and exceedingly anxious that smaller favour should, on no account, be withheld from him. When he played the part of Don Carlos, in the opera of "The Duenna," he was disappointed with the measure of applause bestowed upon his efforts, and complained that the obbligato cadenza—which Mr. Parke had time out of mind played on the oboe in the symphony of the song, "Had I a heart for falsehood framed"—interfered with the effect of his singing, and that the applause which was obtained by the cadenza deprived him of his encore. Accordingly he requested that the cadenza might be suppressed. "Though I thought this a mean and silly application," says Mr. Parke, "I complied with it, and never interfered with his encores afterwards." It must be said for Sinclair, however, that encores had come to be

regarded as tests of a singer's merits, and that a re-engagement at the theatre sometimes depended upon this demonstration of public approval. At Vauxhall Gardens, indeed, the manager—"who was not," says Mr. Parke, "a musical luminary"—formed his opinion of the capacities of his singers from the report of a person appointed to register the number of encores obtained by each during the season. The singers who had received the most encores were forthwith re-engaged for the next year. Upon the whole, however, the system was not found to be completely satisfactory. The inferior vocalists, stimulated by the fear of losing their engagements, took care to circulate orders judiciously among their friends, with instructions as to the songs that were to be particularly applauded; and it frequently resulted that the worst performers, if the most artful manœuvrers, were at the head of the poll at the end of the season, and re-engaged over the heads of superior artists, and greatly to the ultimate detriment of the concern. In reference to this system of obtaining encores, Mr. Parke cautiously observes: "Without presuming to insinuate that it was surreptitiously introduced into our English theatres, I may be permitted to observe, after forty years' experience in theatrical tactics, that it would not be difficult, through a judicious distribution of determined *forcers* in various parts of a theatre, with Herculean hands and stentorian

voices, to achieve that enviable distinction." Possibly the reader, bearing in mind certain great successes and double and treble encores of our own time, may confirm, from his own experience, Mr. Parke's opinions and suggestions in this direction.

It was a rule of the theatre of the last century that, although the audience were at liberty to demand the presence of an actor upon the stage, particularly with a view to his giving an explanation of any matter in which he had offended them, this privilege did not extend to the case of anyone connected with the theatre other than in a histrionic capacity. Thus, when in the year 1744 a serious riot occurred in Drury Lane Theatre, relative to the excessive charges made for admission to an old entertainment—it being understood that for new entertainments it was permissible to raise the prices—"the Manager (Mr. Fleetwood) was called for by the audience in full cry ; but, not being an actor, he pleaded his privilege of being exempted from appearing on the stage before them, and sent them word by one of the performers that he was ready to confer with any persons they should depute to meet him in his own room. A deputation accordingly went from the pit, and the house patiently waited their return."

At this time, no doubt, the actor laboured under certain social disadvantages ; and the manager who did not act, however insignificant

a person otherwise, was generally regarded as enjoying a more dignified position than that occupied by the most eminent of performers. In time, of course, the status of the actor improved, and he outgrew the supposititious degradation attaching to his exercise of his profession. We have lived to see composers, authors, and even scene-painters summoned before the foot-lights, nothing loath, apparently, to accept this public recognition of their merits. But these are innovations of quite recent date. In a reputable literary and critical journal,\* of forty years back, appears an account of the production at the English Opera House (now the Lyceum Theatre) of the opera of "Nourjahad," the work of the late Mr. E. J. Loder, of Bath, then described as the leader of the theatrical orchestra there, and the son and successor of Mr. Loder, whose talents as a musician had been long known in that city, and at the Philharmonic and other concerts. Much praise is awarded to the work, and then we find the following paragraph :

"The silly practice of calling for a favourite actor at the end of a play was upon this occasion, for the first time, extended to a composer ; and Mr. E. J. Loder was produced upon the stage to make his bow. As the chance portion of the audience could not possibly be aware that a gentleman so little

\* *The Athenaeum.*

known in London was present, it would have betrayed less of the secrets of the prison-house if this bit of nonsense had not been preconcerted by injudicious and over-zealous friends. The turn of successful authors will, we suppose, come next; and, therefore, such of them as are not actors had better take a few lessons in bowing over the lamps and be ready. We know some half-dozen whom this process would cause to shake in their shoes more vehemently than even the already accumulated anxieties of a first night."

The critic was, in some sort, a seer. The turn of the authors arrived in due course, some years later, although history has not been careful to record the name of the first English dramatist who appeared before the curtain and bowed "over the lamps." How far the accomplishment of this proceeding is attended by shaking in the shoes, is preluded by lessons in the art of deportment, or adds to the anxieties of a first representation, must be left for some successful playwright to reveal.

It may be noted that this calling for the author is also of foreign origin. The first dramatist called before the curtain in France was Voltaire, after the production of "Merope;" the second was Marmontel, after the representation of his tragedy of "Dionysius." More than a century ago the author of a "Letter to Mr. Garrick" observed that it was then usual in France for the audience of a new and well-

approved tragedy to summon the author before them that he might personally receive the tribute of public approbation due to his talents. "Nothing like this," he writes, "ever happened in England." "And I may say, never will," commented the author of a reply to the letter, with more confidence than correctness of prophecy. Further, he writes, "I know not how far a French audience may carry their complaisance, but, were I in the author's case, I should be unwilling to trust to the civility of an English pit or gallery . . . . Suppose that every play that is offered should be received, and suppose that some one of them should happen to be damned, might not an English audience on this occasion call for the author, not to partake of their applause, indeed, but to receive the tokens of their displeasure?" Fears of this kind have been proved groundless, however. When a play is condemned, the actors and the manager may suffer, and be subjected sometimes to very considerable affront; but the public wrath is not visibly inflicted upon the author. He is left to the punishment of his reflections and his disappointed hopes. Certainly he incurs no bodily risk from the incivility of the pit or gallery. But the old violent method of condemning a play is nearly out of vogue. The offending work is now left to expire of inanition, as it were. Empty benches and a void treasury are found to be efficacious means of convincing

a manager that he has failed in his endeavour to entertain the public.

For some time the successful author, yielding to the demand that he should appear personally before the audience, was content to "bow his acknowledgments"—for so the proceeding is generally described—from a private box. It was felt, however, that this was but a half measure. He could be seen by a portion of the audience only. From the private box to the stage was but a step, and the opinion prevailed that if he was to appear at all, he must manifest himself thoroughly, and allow the whole house a fair opportunity of viewing him. Still it should be understood that it is at the option of the dramatist to present himself publicly or to remain in private, and leave the audience to form such conjectures as may occur to them concerning the nature of his physical aspect. The public have no more real right to insist on the dramatic author's crossing the stage than to require that a successful poet, or novelist, or historian, shall remain on view at his publisher's for a specified time after the production of his latest work. It is necessary to insist on this, because a little scene that occurred a short time since in a London theatre shows some misapprehension on the subject in the minds of certain of the public. A successful play had been produced by a well-known writer, who was called for in the usual manner at the conclusion of the per-

formance. The stage-manager explained the non-appearance of the author—he was not in the house. Thereupon an angry gentleman stood up in the pit, and demanded “Why isn’t he here? He was here during the performance, because I saw him.” The stage-manager could only repeat that the dramatist was not then in the theatre. “But he never appears when he’s called for,” cried the complainant; and he proceeded to mention instances in support of his statement, the stage-manager being detained upon the stage some time during the progress of his argument. The sympathies of the house appeared to be altogether with the expostulant, and the notion that the author had any right to please himself in the matter failed to obtain countenance. Upon a subsequent occasion, indeed, the author in question—another of his works having been given to the stage—thought it prudent to comply with the public demand, and, though with evident reluctance, presented himself before the foot-lights, to be inspected by his admirers and to receive their congratulations. He yielded to a tyranny he was quite justified in resisting. Other authors, though whether or not from unwillingness to appear can hardly be affirmed, have foreborne to attend the first representation of their plays, and the audience have been compelled to be content with the announcement—“Mr. —— is absent from

London." Sometimes particulars are supplied, and happy Mr. — is stated to be "probably, at that precise moment, enjoying his cigar upon the esplanade at Brighton," it being added, that "intelligence of the triumphant reception of his new play shall be forthwith despatched to him by means of the electric telegraph."

If the name of the English author who first bowed over the foot-lights cannot now be ascertained, a dramatist perfectly willing to adopt that course can nevertheless be mentioned. To Talfourd the representation of his dramatic works was always a source of intense delight. He would travel almost any distance to see one of his plays upon the boards. Macready has left some curious particulars touching the first production of "Ion": "Was called for very enthusiastically by the audience and cheered on my appearance most heartily. . . . Miss Ellen Tree was afterwards called forward. Talfourd came into my room and heartily shook hands with me and thanked me. He said something about Mr. Wallack, the stage manager, wishing him *to go on the stage as they were calling; but it would not be right.* I said, '*On no account in the world.*'" He shortly left me, and, as I heard, was made to go forward to the front of his box and receive the enthusiastic tribute of the house's grateful delight. How happy he must have been! In

1838, concerning the first night of Sheridan Knowles's play of "Woman's Wit," Macready writes: "Acted Walsingham in a very crude, nervous, unsatisfactory way. Avoided a call by going before the curtain to give out the play; there was very great enthusiasm. Led on Knowles in obedience to the call of the audience." But Knowles was not an author only, he was an actor also—he had trod the boards as his own Master Walter, and in other parts, although he was not included in the cast of "Woman's Wit." No doubt, from Macready's point of view, this distinguished his case clearly from that of Talfourd's.

After the calling on of authors came the calling on of scene-painters. (Are we, with due regard for the existing state of the drama, to say, with Mr. Fechter in "The Duke's Motto," "after the lacqueys, the masters ?") But of late, with the help of much salutary criticism on the subject, a disposition has arisen to check this very preposterous method of acknowledging the merits of a worthy class, who should be satisfied with learning from the wings or the back of the stage the admiration excited by their achievements, and to consider themselves in such wise as sufficiently rewarded. If they are to appear between their scenes and the public, why not also the costumiers and the gas-fitters, and the numberless other contributors to theatrical success and glory ? Indeed, as a rule, the applause, calls, and encores

of the theatre are honours to be conferred on singers and actors only, are their rightful and peculiar property, and should hardly be diverted from them or shared with others, upon any pretence whatever.

## CHAPTER X.

### REAL HORSES.

A HORSE in the highway is simply a horse and nothing more ; but, transferred to the theatre, the noble animal becomes a *real* horse. The distinction is necessary in order that there may be no confusing the works of nature with the achievements of the property-maker. Not that this indispensable dramatic artist shrinks from competition. But he would not have ascribed to him the production of another manufactory, so to say. His business is in counterfeits ; he views with some disdain a genuine article. When the famous elephant Chunee stepped upon the stage of Covent Garden, the chief performer in the pantomime of "Harlequin and Padmanaba, or the Golden Fish," the creature was but scornfully regarded by Mr. Johnson, the property-man of Drury Lane. "I should be very sorry," he cried, "if I could not make a better elephant than that !" And it would seem that he afterwards justified his

pretensions, especially in the eyes of the playgoers prizing imitative skill above mere reality. We read in the parody of Coleridge, in "Rejected Addresses :"

Amid the freaks that modern fashion sanctions,  
It grieves me much to see live animals  
Brought on the stage. Grimaldi has his rabbit,  
Laurent his cat, and Bradbury his pig ;  
Fie on such tricks ! Johnson, the machinist,  
Of former Drury, imitated life  
Quite to the life ! The elephant in Blue Beard,  
Stuffed by his hand, wound round his lithe proboscis  
As spruce as he who roared in Padmanaba.

But no doubt an artificial elephant is more easily to be fabricated than an artificial horse. We do not encounter real elephants at every turn with which to compare the counterfeit. The animal is of bulky proportions, and somewhat ungainly movements. With a frame of wicker-work, and a hide of painted canvas, the creature can be fairly represented. But a horse is a different matter. Horses abound, however, and have proved themselves, time out of mind, apt pupils. They can readily be trained and taught to perform all kinds of feats and antics. So the skill of the property-maker is not taxed. He stands on one side, and permits the real horse to enter upon the mimic scene.

When Don Adriano de Armado, the fantastical Spaniard of "Love's Labour's Lost," admits that he is "ill at reckoning," and cannot tell "how many is one thrice told," his page Moth observes "how easy it is to put years to the

word three, and study three years in two words, the dancing horse will tell you." This is without doubt an allusion to a horse called Marocco, trained by its master, one Banks, a Scotchman, to perform various strange tricks. Marocco, a young bay nag of moderate size, was exhibited in Shakespeare's time in the court-yard of the Belle Sauvage Inn, on Ludgate Hill, the spectators lining the galleries of the hostelry. A pamphlet, published in 1595, and entitled "Maroccus Exstaticus, or Bankes Bay Horse in a Traunce ; a Discourse set down in a Merry Dialogue between Bankes and his Beast," contains a wood-print of the performing animal and his proprietor. Banks' horse must have been one of the earliest "trained steeds" ever exhibited. His tricks excited great amazement, although they would hardly now be accounted very wonderful. Marocco could walk on his hind legs, and even dance the Canaries. At the bidding of his master he would carry a glove to a specified lady or gentleman, and tell, by raps with his hoof, the numbers on the upper face of a pair of dice. He went through, indeed, much of what is now the regular "business" of the circus horse. In 1600 Banks amazed London by taking his horse up to the vane on the top of St. Paul's Cathedral. Marocco visited Scotland and France, and in these countries his accomplishments were generally attributable to witchcraft. Banks rashly encouraged the notion.

that his nag was supernaturally endowed. An alarm was raised that Marocco was possessed by the Evil One. To relieve misgivings and escape reproach, Banks made his horse pay homage to the sign of the cross, and called upon all to observe that nothing satanic could have been induced to perform this act of reverence. A rumour at one time prevailed that the horse and his master had both, as "subjects of the Black Power of the world," been burned at Rome by order of the Pope. More authentic accounts, however, show Banks as surviving to Charles I.'s time, and thriving as a vintner in Cheapside. But it is to be gathered from Douce's "Illustrations of Shakespeare," that of old certain performing horses suffered miserably for their skill. In a little book, "Le Diable Bossu," Nancy, 1708, allusion is made to the burning alive at Lisbon, in 1707, of an English horse, whose master had taught him to know the cards ; and Grainger, in his "Biographical History of England, 1779," states that, within his remembrance, "a horse, which had been taught to perform several tricks, was, with its owner, put into the Inquisition."

Marocco was but a circus horse ; there is no evidence to show that he ever trod the stage, or took any part in theatrical performances. It is hard to say, indeed, when horses first entered a regular theatre. Pepys chronicles, in 1668, a visit "to the King's Playhouse, to

see an old play of Shirley's, called "Hide Park," the first day acted [revived], where horses are brought upon the stage." He expresses no surprise at the introduction of the animals, and this may not have been their first appearance on the scene. He is content to note that "Hide Park" is "a very moderate play, only an excellent epilogue spoken by Beck Marshall." The scene of the third and fourth acts of the comedy lies in the Park, and foot and horse races are represented. The horses probably were only required to cross the stage once or twice.

A representation of Corneille's tragedy of "Andromeda," in 1682, occasioned great excitement in Paris, owing to the introduction of a "real horse" to play the part of Pegasus. The horse was generally regarded as a kind of Roscius of the brute creation, and achieved an extraordinary success. Adorned with wings and hoisted up by machinery, he neighed and tossed his head, pawed and pranced in mid-air after a very lively manner. It was a mystery then, but it is common enough knowledge now, that the horse's histrionic skill is founded upon his appetite. Kept without food for some time the horse becomes naturally moved at the sight of a sieve of corn in the side-wings. His feats, the picking up of gloves and handkerchiefs, even the pulling of triggers, originate but in his efforts to find oats. By-and-by his memory is exercised, and he is

content to know that after the conclusion of his "business," he will be rewarded with oats behind the scenes. The postponement of his meals attends his failure to accomplish what is required of him. Of old, perhaps, some cruel use of whip and spur may have marked the education of the "trick-horse." But for a long time past the animal's fears have not been appealed to, but simply his love of food. Horses are very sagacious, and their natural timidity once appeased, they become exceedingly docile. An untrained horse has often shown himself equal to the ordinary requirements of the equestrian manager after only four days of tuition.

Pope satirised the introduction of horses in Shakespeare's "Henry VIII.", revived with great splendour in 1727, when a representation was given of the coronation of Anne Bullen, and the royal champion, duly mounted and caparisoned, proclaimed his challenge. But for many years the appearances on the stage of equine performers were only of an occasional kind. It was not until the rebuilding of Astley's, in 1803, that the equestrian drama became an established entertainment. An extensive stage was then added to the circus, and "horse spectacles," as they were called, were first presented. A grand drama called "The Blood-Red Knight," produced in 1810, resulted in a profit to the proprietors of £18,000, a handsome sum, seeing that the season at that

time only extended from Easter to the end of September.

The triumphs of Astley's excited the envy of the Covent Garden managers. Colman's drama of "Blue Beard" was reproduced, with Mr. Johnson's imitation elephant, and a troop of real horses. The performance was presented on forty-four nights, a long run in those days. There was, of course, much wrath excited by this degradation of the stage. A contemporary critic writes: "A novel and marked event occurred at this theatre on this evening (18th of February, 1811), which should be considered as a black epocha for ever by the loyal adherents to wit and the Muses. As the Mussulmen date their computation of years from the flight of Mahomet, so should the hordes of folly commence their triumphant register from the open flight of common-sense on this memorable night, when a whole troop of horses made their first appearance in character at Covent Garden." The manager was fiercely denounced for his unscrupulous endeavours "to obtain money at the expense of his official dignity." Another critic, alleging that "the dressing-rooms of the new company of comedians were under the orchestra," complained that "in the first row of the pit the stench was so abominable, one might as well have sitten in a stable." Still the "equestrian drama" delighted the town. "Blue Beard" was followed by Monk Lewis's "Timour the Tartar," in which more horses

appeared. Some hissing was heard at the commencement of the new drama, and placards were exhibited in the pit condemning the horses; but in the end "Timour" triumphed over all opposition, and rivalled the run of "Blue Beard." It is to be remembered, especially by those who insist so much on the degeneracy of the modern theatre, that these "horse spectacles" were presented in a patent house during the palmy days of the drama, while the Kemble family was still in possession of the stage of Covent Garden.

These equestrian doings were satirised at the Haymarket Theatre in the following summer. "The Quadrupeds of Quedlinburgh, or the Rovers of Weimar," was produced, being an adaptation by Colman of a burlesque, attributed to Canning, in "The Anti-Jacobin." It was designed to ridicule not merely the introduction of horses upon the stage, but also the then prevailing taste for morbid German dramas of the Kotzebue school. The prologue was in part a travestie of Pope's prologue to "Cato," and contained references to the plays of "Lovers' Vows" and "The Stranger."

To lull the soul by spurious strokes of art,  
To warp the genius and mislead the heart,  
To make mankind revere wives gone astray,  
Love pious sons who rob on the highway,  
For this the foreign muses trod our stage,  
Commanding German schools to be the rage.

\* \* \* \* \*

Dear Johnny Bull, you boast much resolution,  
With, thanks to Heaven, a glorious constitution;

Your taste, recovered half from foreign quacks,  
Takes airings now on English horses' backs,  
While every modern bard may raise his name,  
If not on lasting praise, on stable fame.  
Think that to Germanus you have given no check,  
Think how each actor horsed has risked his neck ;  
You've shown them favour. Oh, then, once more show it  
To this night's Anglo-German horse-play poet.

In the course of the play the sentimental sentinel in "Pizarro" was ridiculed, and the whole concluded with a grand battle, in which the last scene of "Timour the Tartar" was imitated and burlesqued. "Stuffed ponies and donkeys frisked about with ludicrous agility," writes a critic of the time. The play was thoroughly successful, and would seem to have retrieved the fortunes of the theatre, which had been long in a disastrous condition.

Drury Lane also struck a blow at the "horse spectacles" of the rival house. In 1812 was produced "Quadrupeds; or, The Manager's Last Kick." This was only a revised version of the old burlesque of "The Tailors, a Tragedy for Warm Weather," usually ascribed to Foote. In the last scene an army of tailors appeared, mounted on asses and mules, and much fun of a pantomimic kind ensued. Some years later, however, Drury Lane was content to derive profit from a drama in which "real horses" appeared, with the additional attraction of "real water." This was Moncrieff's play of "The Cataract of the Ganges." Indeed, Drury Lane was but little entitled to vaunt its superiority in the matter.

In 1803 its treasury had greatly benefited from the feats of the "real dog" in Reynolds's melodrama "The Caravan." "Real water," indeed, had been brought upon the stage by Garrick himself, who owed his prosperity, not more to his genius as an actor than to his ingenuity as a purveyor of pantomime and spectacles. One of his addresses to his audience contains the lines—

What eager transport stares from every eye,  
When pulleys rattle, and our genii fly,  
When tin cascades like falling waters gleam,  
Or through the canvas bursts the real stream,  
While thirsty Islington laments in vain  
Half her New River rolled to Drury Lane.

Of late years a change has come over the equestrian drama. The circus flourishes, and quadrupeds figure now and then upon the stage, but the "horse spectacle" has almost vanished. The noble animal is to be seen occasionally on the boards, but he is cast for small parts only, is little better than a four-footed supernumerary. He comes on to aid the pageantry of the scene; even opera does not disdain his services in this respect. A richly-caparisoned charger performs certain simple duties in "Masaniello," in "Les Huguenots," "L'Etoile du Nord," "Martha," "La Juive," and some few other operas. The late M. Jullien introduced quite a troop of cavalry in his "Pietro il Grande," but this homage to horseflesh notwithstanding, the world did not

---

greatly prize the work in question. The horse no longer performs "leading business." Plays are not now written for him. He is no longer required to evince the fidelity and devotion of his nature by knocking at street-doors, rescuing a imprisoned master, defending oppressed innocence, or dying in the centre of the stage to slow music. Something of a part seemed promised him when the popular drama of " Flying Scud " was first represented ; at least, he supplied that work with its title. But it was speedily to be perceived that animal interests had been subordinated to human. More prominent occupation by far was assigned to the rider than to the horse. A different plan of distributing parts prevailed when " The High-mettled Racer " and kindred works adorned the stage. A horse with histrionic instincts and acquirements had something like a chance then. But now ! he can only lament the decline of the equestrian drama. True, the circus is still open to him ; but in the eyes of a well-educated performing horse a circus must be much what a music-hall is in the opinion of a tragedian devoted to five-act plays.

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE "SUPER."

THE theatrical supernumerary—or the "super," as he is familiarly called—is a man who in his time certainly plays many parts, and yet obtains applause in none. His exits and his entrances, his *début* and his disappearance, alike escape criticism and record. His name is not printed in the playbills, and is for ever unknown to his audience. Even the persons he is supposed to represent upon the stage always remain anonymous. Both as a living and fictitious creature he is denied individuality, and has to be considered collectively, massed with others, and inseparable from his companion figures. He is not so much an actor, as part of the decorations, the animated furniture, so to say, of the stage. Nevertheless, "supers" have their importance and value. For how could the drama exist without its background groups: its soldiers, citizens, peasants, courtiers, nobles, guests, and attendants

of all kinds ? These give prominence, support, and effect to the leading characters of the theatre ; and these are the "supers."

Upon the French stage the minor assistants of the scene are comprehensively described as *les choristes*. In this way the pedigree of the "super" gains something of nobility, and may, perhaps, be traced back to the chorus of the antique drama, a body charged with most momentous duties, with symbolic mysteries of dance and song, removed from the perils and catastrophes of the play, yet required in regard to these to guide and interpret the sympathies of the spectators. In its modern application, however, this generic term has its subdivisions, and includes *les choristes* proper, who boast musical attainments, and are obedient to the rule of a *chef d'attaque*, or head chorister ; *les accessoires*, performers permitted speech of a brief kind, who can be intrusted upon occasion with such simple functions as opening a door, placing a chair, or delivering a letter, and who correspond in many respects with our actors of utility ; *les figurants*, the subordinate dancers led by a *coryphée* ; and lastly, *les comparses*, who closely resemble our supernumeraries, and are engaged in more or less numbers, according to the exigencies of the representation. Of these aids to performance *les comparses* only enjoy no regular salaries, are not formally enrolled among the permanent members of

the establishment, but are paid simply for appearing—seventy-five centimes for the night, and fifty centimes for each rehearsal—or upon some such modest scale of remuneration. This classification would appear to afford opportunities to ambition. Here are steps in the ladder, and merit should be able to ascend. It is understood, however, that as a rule *les comparses* do not rise. They are the serfs of the stage, who never obtain manumission. They are as conscripts, from whose knapsacks the field-marshall's *bâton* is almost invariably omitted. They become veterans, but their length of service receives no favourable recognition. *Comparses* they live and *comparses* they die, or disappear, not apparently discontented with their doom, however. Meantime the *figurant* cherishes sanguine hopes that he may one day rise to a prominent position in the ballet, or that he may become an *accessoire*; and the *accessoire* looks forward fervently to ranking in the future among the regular actors or *artistes* of the theatre, with the right of entering its *grand foyer*, or superior green-room. Until then he must confine himself and his aspirations to the *petit foyer* set apart for the use of players of his class.

Thus it is told of a certain *accessoire* of the Porte St. Martin, in years past, who had won a scarcely appreciable measure of fame for his adroitness in handing letters or coffee-cups upon a salver, and even for the

propriety with which he announced, in the part of a footman, the guests and visitors of a drama—such as “Monsieur le Viscomte de St. Rémy!” or “Madame la Marquise de Roncourt!”—that he applied to his manager for an increase of his salary on account of the special value of his services. “I do not expect,” he frankly said, “immediately to receive 25,000 francs, as Monsieur Frédéric Lemaitre does; no, not yet; although I bear in mind that Monsieur Lemaitre began his career with fighting broad-sword combats in Madame Saqui’s circus; but my present salary is but 600 francs a year, and a slight increase—”

“Monsieur Fombonne,” interrupted the manager, “I acknowledge the justice of your application. I admire and esteem you. You are one of the most useful members of my company. I well know your worth; no one better.”

Monsieur Fombonne, glowing with pleasure, bowed in his best manner.

“I may venture to hope, then—”

“By all means, Monsieur Fombonne. Hope sustains us under all our afflictions. Always hope. For my part hope is the only thing left me. Business is wretched. The treasury is empty. I cannot possibly raise your salary. But you are an artist, and therefore above pecuniary considerations. I do not—I cannot—offer you money. But I can gratify a

laudable ambition. Hitherto you have ranked only as an *accessoire*; from this time forward you are an actor. I give you the right of entering the *grand foyer*. You are permitted to call Monsieur Lemaitre *mon camarade*; to *tutoyer* Mademoiselle Theodorine. I am sure, Monsieur Fombonne, that you will thoroughly appreciate the distinction I have conferred upon you."

Monsieur Fombonne was delighted. He was subsequently to discover, however, that some disadvantages attended his new dignity; that the medal he had won had its reverse. The *accessoires* and *figurants* of the theatre always received their salaries on the first day of each month. The *artistes* were not paid until the sixth or seventh day. Monsieur Fombonne had to live upon credit for a week as the price of his new privileges. His gain was shadowy; his loss substantial.

With the choristers proper we are not here much concerned. They are not fairly to be classed among "supers," and they pertain almost exclusively to the lyric stage. It is to be noted, however, that they are in some sort evidence of the connection that once existed between the Church and the Theatre; the ecclesiastical and the laical drama. At any rate, the chorus singers often undertake divided duties in this respect, and accept engagements both at the cathedral and the opera-house. And sometimes it has happened that the dis-

---

charge of their dual obligations has involved them in serious difficulties. Thus, some years since, there is said to have been a Christmas spectacle in preparation at the Opera House in Paris. The entertainment was of a long and elaborate kind, and for its perfect production numberless rehearsals, early and late, dress and undress, were imperatively necessary. Now the chorus of the opera also represented the choir of Notre Dame. It was a season of the year for which the Church has appointed many celebrations. The singers were incessantly running to and fro between the Opera House and Notre Dame. Often they had not a moment to spare, and punctuality in attending their appointments was scarcely possible, while the trouble of so frequently changing their costumes was extremely irksome to them. On one occasion a dress rehearsal at the theatre, which commenced at a very late hour, after the conclusion of the ordinary performance of the evening, was so protracted that the time for the early service at the cathedral was rapidly approaching. The chorus appeared as demons at the opera, and wore the tight-fitting scaly dresses which time out of mind have been invested upon the stage with diabolical attributes. What were they to do ? Was there time to undress and dress again ? Scarcely. Besides, was it worth the trouble ? It was very dark ; bitterly cold ; there was not a soul to be seen in the streets ; all Paris was abed

and asleep. Moreover, the door of the sacristy would be ready open to receive them, and their white stoles would be immediately obtainable. Well, the story goes that these desperate singers, accoutred as they were, ran as fast as they could to *Notre Dame*, veiled their satanic dresses beneath the snowy surplices of the choir, and accomplished their sacred duties without any discovery of the impropriety of their conduct. It is true they encountered in their course a patrol of the civic guard ; but the representatives of law and order, forming probably their own conclusions as to the significance of the demoniac apparition, are said to have prudently taken to flight in an opposite direction.

Upon our early English stage the "super" had frequent occupation ; the Shakesperian drama, indeed, makes large demands upon the mute performers. The stage at this time was not very spacious, however, and was in part occupied by the more pretentious of the spectators, who, seated upon stools, or reclining upon the rushes which strewed the boards, were attended by their pages, and amused themselves with smoking their pipes and noisily criticising the performance. There was little room therefore for any great number of supernumeraries. But spectacles—to which the "super" has always been indispensable—had already won the favour of playgoers. Sir Henry Wotton writes in 1613 of a new play produced at the

Globe Theatre, "called 'All is True,' representing some principal pieces of the reign of Henry VIII., which was set forth with many extraordinary circumstances of pomp and majesty, even to matting of the stage; the knights of the order with their Georges and Garter, the guards with their embroidered coats and the like; sufficient, in truth, within a while to make greatness very familiar, if not ridiculous." "Supers" must surely have been employed on this occasion. It is clear, however, that the money-takers, "or gatherers," as they were called, after the audience had assembled, and their presence was no longer needed at the doors, were accustomed to appear upon the stage as the representatives of guards, soldiers, &c. An early play refers to the combats of the scene being accomplished by "the blue-coated stage-keepers," or attendants. And the actors were classified at this time, according to their professional standing, as "whole sharers," "three-quarter sharers," "half sharers," and "hired men," or "servitors." The leading players were as joint proprietors in the undertaking, and divided the receipts among them according to a prearranged scale. Minor characters were sustained by the "servitors," who were paid, as our actors are at the present time, by weekly wages, and had no other interest in the success of the theatre with which they were associated, beyond desire that its exchequer might be always equal to

their claims upon it. Philip Henslowe's "Diary" contains an entry regarding a non-sharing actor: "Hiered as a covenant servant Willyam Kendall—to give him for his said servis everi week of his playing in London ten shillings, and in the countrie five shillings, for the which he covaunteth to be redye at all houres to play in the house of the said Philip, and in no other." It may be noted that Shakespeare's first connection with the Globe Theatre is shown upon fair evidence to have been originally that of a "servitor." In that case the poet must often have been required to appear in very subordinate characters—perhaps even characters not entrusted with speech. Will it inflame too violently the ambition of our modern "supers" to suggest to them that very possibly Shakespeare himself may have preceded them in the performance of their somewhat inglorious duties? The hired men or servitors were under the control and in the pay of the proprietor or manager of the theatre, and their salaries constituted no charge upon the shares of the chief actors. Still these were entitled to complain, apparently, if the hired men were too few in number to give due effect to the representations. In 1614 a dispute arose between Henslowe and his sharing actors, by reason of his having suddenly reduced his expenses by dismissing "four hired men." He had previously sought to

charge their stipends upon the shares, although bound by agreement to defray these expenses out of the money derived from the galleries—at this time, perhaps, a managerial perquisite. But in addition to the servitors, as the representatives of minor and mute characters, there were also available the journeymen or apprentices of the more eminent performers. If they paid no premium upon being articled, novices were at any rate bound in return for the education they received to hand their earnings, or a large part of them, to their masters. And this is precisely the case at the present time in regard to the pupils of musical professors and the teachers of singing, dancing, and feats of the circus. The services of the apprentices were transferable, and could be bought and sold. There is quite a slave-trade aspect about the following entry in Henslowe's "Diary." "Bowght my boye Jeames Brystow, of William Augusten, player, the 8th of December, 1597, for eight pounds." Augustine Phillips, the actor, one of Shakespeare's partners, who died in 1605, and who by his will bequeathed to Shakespeare "a thirty shillings peece in gould," also gave to "Samuell Gilborne, my late apprentice, the some of fortye shillings, and my mouse-coloured velvit hose, and a white taffety dublet, a blacke taffety sute, my purple cloke, sword and dagger, and my base viall." He also gave to "James Sands, my apprentice, the some of forty shil-

lings and a citterne, a bandore, and a lute, to be paid and delivered unto him at the expiration of his terme of yeres in his indentur of apprenticeship." From his bequest of musical instruments, it has been conjectured that Phillips sometimes played in what is now called the orchestra of the theatre. A sum of forty shillings in Elizabeth's time represents the value of about ten pounds of our currency. What with its "gatherers," "servitors," and journeymen, the Shakespearian stage was obviously provided sufficiently with supernumerary assistants.

The "super" is useful, even ornamental in his way, though it behoves him always to stand aloof from the foot-lights, so that distance may lend his aspect as much enchantment as possible; but he is not highly esteemed by the general public. In truth he has been long the object of ridicule and caricature. He is charged with stupidity, and is popularly considered as a very absurd sort of creature. But he has resigned his own volition; he has but to obey. He is as a puppet whose wires are pulled by others. He is under the rule of a "super-master," who is in his turn governed by the wavings of the prompter's white flag in the wings, the prompter being controlled by the stage-manager, who is supposed to be the executant of the dramatist's intentions. The "super's" position upon the stage is strictly defined for him; sometimes even marked on

the boards with chalk. He may not move until the word of command is given him, and then every change of station or attitude must be pursuant to previous instruction. And his duties are sometimes arduous. He may often be required to change his attire and assume a new personality in the course of one night's performances. A member of a band of brigands in one scene, he may in another be enrolled in a troop of soldiers, sent to combat with and capture those malefactors. In the same play he may wear now the robes of a nobleman, and now the rags of a mendicant. A demon possessed of supernatural powers at the opening of a pantomime, he is certain before its close to be found among those good-natured people who saunter across the stage for the sole purpose, as it would seem, of being assaulted and battered by the clown and pantaloon. It is not surprising altogether that a certain apathy gradually steals over him, and that such intelligence as he ever possessed becomes in time somewhat numbed by the peculiar nature of his profession. Moreover, in regard to the play in which he takes part he is generally but dimly informed. Its plot and purpose are a mystery to him. He never sees it represented or rehearsed as an entirety. His own simple duties accomplished, he is hurried to the rear of the stage to be out of the way of the actors. Why he bends his knee to one performer and loads

another with fetters ; why there is banning in this scene and blessing in that ; why the heroine in white adores the gallant in blue and abominates her suitor in red, are to him inexplicable matters. The dramas in which he figures only impress his mind in relation to the dresses he is constrained to assume during their representation, the dresses being never of his own choosing, rarely fitting him, and their significance being always outside his comprehension. To him the tragedy of King John is but the occasion on which he and his fellows "wore them tin pots on our 'eads ;" Julius Cæsar the play in which "we went on in sheets." "What are we supposed to be ?" a curious "super" once inquired of a more experienced comrade. "Blessed if I know," was the answer. "Demons I expect." They were clothing themselves in chain-mail, and were "supposed to be"—Crusaders.

The "super's" dress is, indeed, his prime consideration, and out of it arises his greatest grievance. He must surrender himself unconditionally to the costumier, and obey implicitly his behests. Summer or winter he has no voice in the question ; he must clothe himself warmly or scantily, just as he is bidden. "Always fleshings when there's a frost," a "super" was once heard to grumble, who conceived the classical system of dress or undress—and for that matter, perhaps, the classical drama also—to be invented solely for his inconvenience and

discomfort. But more trying than this antique garb is the demoniac mask of pantomime, which is as a diver's helmet ill provided with appliances for admitting air or permitting outlook. The group of panting "supers," with their mimic heads under their arms—their faces smeared with red or blue, in accordance with direction, not of their own choice—to be discovered behind the scenes during the performance of a Christmas piece, is an impressive portion of the spectacle, although it is withheld from the contemplation of the audience. There have been "supers" who approached very near to death by suffocation, from the hurtful nature of their attire, rather than fail in the discharge of their duties. For there is heroism everywhere.

The stage has always been fertile in the matter of anecdote, and of course comical stories of "supers" have abounded; for these, the poorest of players, are readily available for facetious purposes. Thus, so far back as the days of Quin, there is record of a curious misapprehension on the part of the supernumeraries of the time. Quin's pronunciation was of a broad old-fashioned kind, a following of a traditional method of elocution from which Garrick did much to release the theatre. The play was Thomson's "Coriolanus," and Quin appeared as the hero. In the scene of the Roman ladies' entry in procession, to solicit the return to Rome of Coriolanus, the stage was filled

with tribunes and centurions of the Volscian army, bearing fasces, their ensigns of authority. Quin, as the hero, commanded them to "lower their fasces" by way of homage to the matrons of Rome. But the representatives of the centurions understood him to mean their *faces*, and much to the amusement of the audience all reverently bowed their heads with absurd unanimity.

But it is as the performers of "guests" that the "supers" have especially moved derision in our theatres; and, indeed, on the Parisian stage *les invités* have long been established provocatives of laughter. The assumption of evening dress and something of the manners of polite society, has always been severely trying to the supernumerary actor. What can he really know of balls and fashionable assemblies? Of course speech is not demanded of him, nor is his presence needed very near to the proscenium, but he is required to give animation to the background, and to be as easy and graceful as he may in his aspect and movements. The result is not satisfactory. He is more at home in less refined situations. He is prone to indulge in rather grotesque gestures, expressive of admiration of the brilliant decorations surrounding him, and profuse, even servile gratitude for the hospitality extended to him. He interchanges mute remarks, enlivened by surprising grimaces, with the lady of the ballet, in the shabbiest of

ball dresses, who hangs affectionately upon his arm. The limited amount of his stipend naturally asserts itself in his costume, which will not bear critical investigation. His boots are of the homeliest and sometimes of the muddiest ; coarse dabs of rouge appear upon his battered cheeks ; his wig—for a “super” of this class almost always wears a wig—is unkempt and decayed ; his white cravat has a burlesque air ; and his gloves are of cotton. There are even stories extant of very economical “supers” who have gone halves in a pair of “berlins,” and even expended rouge on but one side of their faces, pleading that they were required to stand only on the right or the left of the stage, as the case might be, and as they could thus be seen but in profile by the audience, these defects in their appearance could not possibly attract notice. Altogether the “super’s” least effective performance is that of “a guest.”

It is a real advance for a “super” when he is charged with some small theatrical task, which removes him from the ranks of his fellows. He acquires individuality, though of an inferior kind. But his promotion entails responsibilities for which he is not always prepared. Lekain, the French tragedian, playing the part of Tancred, at Bordeaux, required a supernumerary to act as his squire, and carry his helmet, lance, and shield. Lekain’s personal appearance was insignificant, and his

manner at rehearsal had been very subdued. The "super" thought little of the hero he was to serve, and deemed his own duties slight enough. But at night Lekain's majesty of port, and the commanding tone in which he cried, "*Suivez moi!*!" to his squire, so startled and overcame that attendant that he suddenly let fall, with a great crash, the weapons and armour he was carrying. Something of the same kind has often happened upon our own stage. "You distressed me very much, sir," said a famous tragedian once to a "super," who had committed default in some important business of the scene. "Not more than you frightened me, sir," the "super" frankly said. He was forgiven his failure on account of the homage it conveyed to the tragedian's impressiveness.

M. Etienne Arago, writing some years since upon *les choristes*, calls attention to the important services rendered to the stage by its mute performers, and demands their wider recognition. He ventures to hold that as much talent is necessary to constitute a tolerable *figurant* as to make a good actor. He describes the *figurant* as a multiform actor, a dramatic chameleon, compelled by the special nature of his occupation, or rather by its lack of special nature, to appear young or old, crooked or straight, noble or base-born, savage or civilised, according to the good pleasure of the dramatist. "Thus, when Tancred declaims, '*Toi superbe*

*Orbassan, c'est toi que je défie!*' and flings his gauntlet upon the stage, Orbassan has but to wave his hand and an attendant advances boldly, stoops, picks up the gage of battle, and resumes his former position. That is thought to be a very simple duty. But to accomplish it without provoking the mirth of the audience is *le sublime du métier—le triomphe de l'art!*"

The emotions of an author who for the first time sees himself in print, have often been descanted upon. The sensations of a "super," raised from the ranks, entrusted with the utterance of a few words, and enabled to read the entry of his own name in the playbills, are scarcely less entitled to sympathy. His task may be slight enough, the measure of speech permitted him most limited ; the reference to him in the programmes may simply run—

CHARLES (a waiter) ... ... ... MR. JONES.

or even

RAILWAY PORTER ... ... ... MR. BROWN.

but the delight of the performer is infinite. His promotion is indeed of a prodigious kind. Hitherto but a lay-figure, he is now endowed with life. He has become an actor! The world is at length informed of his existence. He has emerged from the crowd, and though it may be but for a moment, can assert his indi-

viduality. He carries his part about with him everywhere—it is but a slip of paper with one line of writing running across it. He exhibits it boastfully to his friends. He reads it again and again ; recites it in every tone of voice he can command—practises his elocutionary powers upon every possible occasion. A Parisian *figurant*, advanced to the position of *acces-soire*, was so elated that he is said to have expressed surprise that the people he met in the streets did not bow to him ; that the sentinels on guard did not present arms as he passed. His reverence for the author in whose play he is to appear is boundless ; he regards him as a second Shakespeare, if not something more. His devotion to the manager, who has given him the part, for a time approaches deliriousness.

"Our new play will be a great go !" a promoted "super" once observed to certain of his fellows. "I play a policeman ! I go on in the last scene, and handcuff Mr. Rant. I have to say, 'Murder's the charge ! Stand back !' Won't that *fetch* the house ?"

There are soldiers doomed to perish in their first battle. And there have been "supers" who have failed to justify their advancement, and, silenced for ever, have had to fall back into the ranks again. The French stage has a story of a *figurant* who ruined at once a new tragedy and his own prospects by an unhappy *lapsus*

*lingua*, the result of undue haste and nervous excitement. He had but to cry, aloud, in the crisis of the drama : “ *Le roi se meurt !* ” He was perfect at rehearsal ; he earned the applause even of the author. A brilliant future, as he deemed, was open to him. But at night he could only utter, in broken tones, “ *Le meurt se roi !* ” and the tragic situation was dissolved in laughter. So, in our own theatre, there is the established legend of Delpini, the Italian clown, who, charged to exclaim at a critical moment, “ Pluck them asunder ! ” could produce no more intelligible speech than “ Massonder em plocket ! ” Much mirth in the house and dismay on the stage ensued. But Delpini had gained his object. He had become qualified as an actor to participate in the benefits of the Theatrical Fund. As a mere pantomimist he was without a title. But John Kemble had kindly furthered the claim of the foreign clown by entrusting him for once with “ a speaking part.” The tragedian, however, had been quite unprepared for the misadventure that was to result.

Delpini was, it appears, doomed to mortification in regard to his attempts at English speech upon the stage. He was engaged as clown at the East London, or Royalty Theatre, in Goodman’s Fields, at a time when that establishment was without a license for dramatic performances, and was incurring the bitter hos-

tility of the patent managers. It was understood, however, that musical and pantomimic entertainments could lawfully be presented. But the unhappy clown, in the course of a harlequinade, had ventured to utter the simple words, "Roast Beef!" and forthwith he was prosecuted and sent to prison as a rogue and a vagabond. For a time he seems to have been even reduced to prison fare. His case is referred to in a prologue written by Miles Peter Andrews, and delivered upon the occasion of a benefit, when the performances not being for "gain, hire, or reward," were held to be permissible. The address was a kind of dialogue, spoken by Mrs. Hudson and Mrs. Gibbs, in the characters of Melpomene and Thalia.

Well, friends, we both are come your hands to kiss,  
The tragic lady and the comic miss ;  
But should we both attempt to keep possession  
Warrants may be issued from the Quarter Session :  
For tho' alone, our tongues may be untied well  
A dialogue will send us both to Bridewell :  
Think of our danger should we meet again  
The informing carpenter of Drury Lane ;  
Danger so dire it staggers all belief,  
Water and bread, for calling out "Roast Beef ! "

It used to be said that at the Parisian Cirque, once famous for its battle-pieces, refractory "supers" were always punished by being required to represent "the enemy" of the evening: the Russians, Prussians, English, or Arabs, as the case might be—who were to be overcome by the victorious soldiers of France

—repulsed at the point of the bayonet, trampled upon and routed in a variety of ignominious ways. The representatives of “the enemy” complained that they could not endure to be hopelessly beaten night after night. Their expostulation was unpatriotic; but it was natural. For “supers” have their feelings, moral as well as physical. At one of our own theatres a roulette-table was introduced in a scene portraying the *salon* at Homburg, or Baden-Baden. Certain of the “supers” petitioned that they should not always appear as the losing gamesters. They desired sometimes to figure among the winners. It need hardly be said that the money that changed hands upon the occasion was only of that valueless kind that has no sort of currency off the stage.

When “supers” appear as modern soldiers in action, it is found advisable to load their guns for them. They fear the “kick” of their weapons, and will, if possible, avoid firing them. Once in a military play a troop of grenadiers were required to fire a volley. Their officer waved his sword and gave the word of command superbly; but no sound followed, save only that of the snapping of locks. Not a gun had been loaded. An unfortunate unanimity had prevailed among the grenadiers. Each had forborne to load his weapon, trusting that his omission would escape notice in the general noise, and assured that a shot more or less

could be of little consequence. It had occurred to no one of them that his scheme might be put into operation by others beside himself—still less that the whole band might adopt it. But this had happened. For the future their guns were given them loaded.

## CHAPTER XII.

### “GAG.”

THE stage, like other professions, is in some sort to be considered as a distinct nation, possessing manners, customs, a code, and, above all, a language of its own. This, by the outside world, is designated “slang”; just as in one country the tongue of another is vulgarly described as gibberish. Now and then, however, a word escapes from the peculiar vocabulary of the players, and secures the recognition and acceptance of the general public. It may not be forthwith registered in formal dictionaries, or sanctioned by the martinets of speech and style; still, like a French sou or a Jersey halfpenny appearing amongst our copper coins, it obtains a fair degree of currency and circulation, with little question as to the legitimacy of the mint from which it originally issued.

“Gag” is a word of this class. It belongs of right to the actors, but of its age or

derivation nothing can be ascertained. Modern lexicography of the best repute does not acknowledge it, and for a long time it remained unnoticed, even by the compilers of glossaries of strange and cant terms. Thus, it is not to be found in "Grose's Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue," published in 1796. This is a coarse, but certainly a comprehensive work, and from its omitting to register "gag," we may assume that the word had no ascertained existence in Grose's time. In the "Slang Dictionary; or, The Vulgar Words, Street Phrases, and 'Fast' Expressions of High and Low Society," published in 1864, "gag" is duly included, and defined to be "language introduced by an actor into his part." Long before this, however, the word had issued from the stage-door, and its signification had become a matter of general knowledge.

And even if the word be comparatively new, the thing it represents and defines is certainly old enough, dating, probably, from the very birth of the drama. So soon as the author began to write words for the actors to deliver, so soon, be sure, did the comedians begin to interpolate speech of their own contriving. For, as a rule, gag is the privilege and the property of the comic performer. The tragedian does not gag. He may require his part to be what is called "written up" for him, and striking matter to be introduced

into his scenes for his own especial advantage, but he is generally confined to the delivery of blank verse, and rhythmical utterances of that kind do not readily afford opportunities for gag. There have been Macbeths who have declined to expire upon the stage after the silent fashion prescribed by Shakespeare, and have insisted upon declaiming the last dying speech with which Garrick first enriched the character. But these are actors of the past. If Shakespeare does not often appear upon the modern stage, at any rate he is not presented in the disguised and mutilated form which won applause in what are now viewed as the "palmy days" of the drama. And the prepared speeches introduced by the tragedians, however alien they may be to the dramatist's intentions, and independent of his creations, are not properly to be considered as gag.

It was in 1583, according to Howes's additions to Stow's "Chronicle," that Queen Elizabeth, at the request of Sir Francis Walsingham, and with the advice of Mr. Edmond Tyllney, her Master of the Revels, selected twelve performers out of some of the companies of her nobility, to be her own dramatic servants, with the special title of the Queen's Players. They duly took the oaths of office, and were allowed wages and liveries as Grooms of the Chambers. Among these actors were included Robert Wilson, described as gifted with "a quick,

delicate, refined, extemporal wit ;" and Richard Tarleton, of "a wondrous, plentiful, pleasant, extemporal wit." From this it would almost seem that these comedians owed their fame and advancement to their skill and inventiveness in the matter of gagging. No doubt these early actors bore some relation to the jesters who were established members of noble households, and of whom impromptu jokes and witticisms were looked for upon all occasions. Moreover, at this time, as Mr. Payne Collier judges, "extemporal plays" in the nature of the Italian *Commedia al improvviso*, were often presented upon the English stage. The actors were merely furnished with a "plat," or plot of the performance, and were required to fill in and complete the outline, as their own ingenuity might suggest. Portions of the entertainments were simply dumb show and pantomime, but it is clear that spoken dialogue was also resorted to. In such cases the "extemporal wit," or gagging of the comic actors, was indispensably necessary. The "comedians of Ravenna," who were not "tied to any written device," but who, nevertheless, had, "certain grounds or principles of their own," are mentioned in Whetstone's "Heptameron," 1582, and references to such performers are also to be found in Kyd's "Spanish Tragedy," and Ben Jonson's "Case is Altered." And Mr. Collier conjectures that when Polonius, speaking of the players, informs Hamlet that, "for

the law of writ and the liberty, these are your only men," he is to be understood as commanding their excellence, both in written performances and in such as left them at liberty to invent their own discourse.

But however intelligible and excusable its origin, it is certain that by the time Shakespeare was writing the "extemporal wit" of the theatre had come to be a very grave nuisance. There is no need to set forth here his memorable rebuke of the clowns who demonstrate their "pitiful ambition" by speaking more than their parts warrant. It is to be observed, however, that while this charge is levelled only at the clowns, or comic performers, the faults of the serious players by no means escape uncriticised. The same speech condemns alike the rant of the tragedians and the gag of the comedians. Both are regarded as unworthy means of winning the applause of the "groundlings" in one case, and the laughter of "barren spectators" in the other. Sad to say, Hamlet, in his character of reformer of stage abuses, failed to effect much good. The vices of the Elizabethan theatre are extant, and thriving in the Victorian. It is even to be feared that the interpolations of the clowns have sometimes crept into and disfigured the Shakespearian text, much to the puzzlement of the commentators. Often as Hamlet's reforming speech has been recited, it has been generally met and

nullified by some one moving “the previous question.” At the same time, while there is an inclination to decry perhaps too strenuously the condition of the modern stage, it is fair to credit it with a measure of amendment in regard both to rant and gag. Of late years rant has certainly declined in public favour, and the “robustious perriwig-pated fellow” tearing a passion to tatters, to very rags, is a less familiar spectacle upon our boards than formerly ; albeit, this statement is obviously open to the reply that the system of “o'er-doing Termagant,” and “out-Heroding Herod” has ceased to prevail, inasmuch as the tragedies and vehement plays, which gave it opportunity and excuse, have vanished from the existing dramatic repertory. And gag, except, perhaps, in relation to certain interpolations, which are founded upon enduring, if absurd histrionic traditions, acknowledges stricter limitations than it once did. A gagging Polonius, Dogberry, Gobbo, or Gravedigger could scarcely expect much toleration from a modern audience ; while it is true enough, that these famous personages do not often present themselves upon the scene in these times. As a rule, the gag of the present period is to be found mainly in those more frivolous and ephemeral entertainments, which are not much to be damned by any excesses with which the comedians may be chargeable.

There is no gainsaying that in all times

gag has been indulgently considered, and even encouraged by the majority of the audience. Establishing relations of a most intimate kind with his audience, the comic actor obtains from them absolute license of speech and conduct. He becomes their "spoiled child," his excesses are promptly applauded, and even his offences against good taste are speedily pardoned.

Of early gagging comedians, one of the most noted appears to have been Will Pinkethman, who flourished under William and Mary, and won honourable mention from Sir Richard Steele, in the "*Tatler*." Cibber describes Pinkethman as an imitator of Leigh, an earlier actor of superior and more legitimate powers. Pinkethman's inclination for "gamesome liberties" and "uncommon pleasantries" was of a most extravagant kind. Davies says of him that he "was in such full possession of the galleries that he would hold discourse with them for several minutes." Nor could he be induced to amend his method of performance. It was in vain the managers threatened to fine him for his exuberances; he was too surely a public favourite to be severely treated. At one time he came to a "whimsical agreement" with Wilks, the actor, who suffered much from his playfellow's eccentricities, that "whenever he was guilty of corresponding with the gods he should receive on his back three smart strokes of

Bob Wilks's cane." But even this penalty, it would seem, Wilks was too good-natured to enforce. On one occasion, however, as Davies relates, Pinkethman so persisted in his gagging as to incur the displeasure of the audience. The comedy was Farquhar's "Recruiting Officer;" Wilks played Captain Plume, and Pinkethman one of the recruits. The captain enlisting him inquired his name. Instead of giving the proper answer, Pinkethman replied: "Why, don't you know my name, Bob? I thought every fool knew that." Wilks angrily whispered to him the name of the recruit, Thomas Appleton. "Thomas Appleton?" he cried aloud. "No, no, my name's Will Pinkethman!" Then, addressing himself to the gallery, he said, "Hark ye, friends; you know my name up there, don't you?" "Yes, Master Pinkey," was the answer, "we know your name well enough." The house was now in an uproar. At first the audience enjoyed the folly of Pinkethman, and the distressed air of Wilks; but soon the joke grew tiresome, and hisses became distinctly audible. By assuming as melancholy an expression as he could, and exclaiming with a strong nasal twang, "Odds, I fear I'm wrong," Pinkethman was enabled to restore the good humour of his patrons. It would seem that on other occasions he was compelled to make some similar apology for his misdemeanours. "I have often thought," Cibber writes, "that

a good deal of the favour he met with was owing to this seeming humble way of waiving all pretences to merit, but what the town would please to allow him." A satiric poem, called "The Players," published in 1733, contains the following reference to Pinkethman :

Quit not your theme to win the gaping rout,  
Nor aim at Pinkey's leer with "S'death, I'm out!"  
An arch dull rogue, who lets the business cool,  
To show how nicely he can play the fool,  
Who with buffoonery his dulness cloaks,  
Deserves a cat-o'-nine-tails for his jokes.

At this time, Pinkethman had been dead some years, and it is explained in a note, that no "invidious reflection upon his memory" was intended ; but merely a caution to others, who, less gifted, should presume to imitate conduct which had not escaped censure even in his case. With all his irregularities, Pinkethman was accounted a serviceable actor, and was often entrusted with characters of real importance, such as Doctor Caius, Feeble, Abel Drugger, Beau Clincher, Humphrey Gubbin, and Jerry Blackacre.

But an actor who outdid even Pinkethman in impertinence of speech was John Edwin, a comedian who enjoyed great popularity late in the last century. A contemporary critic describes him "as one of those extraordinary productions that would do immortal honour to the sock, if his extravasations of whim could be kept within bounds, and if the comicality

of his vein could be restrained by good taste." Reynolds, the dramatist, relates that on one occasion he was sitting in the front row of the balcony-box at the Haymarket, during the performance of O'Keeffe's farce of "The Son-in-Law," Parsons being the Cranky, and Edwin the Bowkitt of the night. In the scene of Cranky's refusal to bestow his daughter upon Bowkitt, on the ground of his being such an ugly fellow, Edwin coolly advanced to the foot-lights, and said : "Ugly ! Now I submit to the decision of an enlightened British public, which is the ugliest fellow of us three ; I, old Cranky, or that gentleman in the front row of the balcony-box ?" Here he pointed to Reynolds, who hastened to abandon his position. Parsons was exceedingly angry at the interruption, but the audience appear to have tolerated, and even enjoyed the gag. As Reynolds himself leniently writes : "Many performers before and since the days of Edwin have acquired the power, by private winks, irrelevant buffoonery, and dialogue, to make their fellow-players laugh, and thus confound the audience, and mar the scene ; Edwin, disdaining this confined and distracting system, established a sort of *entre-nous-ship* (if I may venture to use the expression) with the audience, and made them his confidants ; and though wrong in his principle, yet so neatly and skilfully did he execute it, that instead of injuring the business of the stage, he frequently enriched it."

Edwin seems, indeed, to have been an actor of some genius, notwithstanding his “extravagations of whim,” and an habitual intemperance which probably hastened the close of his professional career—for the man was a shameless sot. “I have often seen him,” writes Boaden, “brought to the stage-door, senseless and motionless, lying at the bottom of a coach.” Yet, if he could but be made to assume his stage-clothes, and pushed towards the lamps, he would rub his eyes for a moment, and then consciousness and extraordinary humour returned to him together, and his acting suffered in no way from the excesses which had overwhelmed him. Eccentricity was his forte, and it was usually found necessary to have characters expressly written for him; but there can be no doubt that he was very highly esteemed by the playgoers of his time, who viewed his loss to the stage as quite irreparable.

But of the comedians it may be said, that they not only “gag” themselves, but they are the cause of “gagging” in others. Their interpolations are regarded as heirlooms in the Thespian family. It is the comic actor’s constant plea, when charged with adding to some famous part, that he has only been true to the traditions of previous performers. One of the most noble instances of established gag is the burlesque sermon introduced by Mawworm, in the last scene of “The Hypocrite.” This was originated by Mathews, who first undertook

the part at the Lyceum in 1809, and who designed a caricature of an extravagant preacher of the Whitfield school, known as Daddy Berridge, whose strange discourses at the Tabernacle in the Tottenham Court Road had grievously afflicted the actor in his youth. Mawworm's sermon met with extraordinary success; on some occasions it was even encored, and the comedy has never since been presented without this supreme effort of gag. Liston borrowed the address from Mathews, and gained for it so great an amount of fame, that the real contriver of the interpolation had reason to complain of being deprived of such credit as was due to him in the matter. The sermon is certainly irresistibly comical, and a fair outgrowth of the character of Mawworm; at the same time it must be observed that Mawworm is himself an excrescence upon the comedy, having no existence in Cibber's "Non-Juror," upon which "The Hypocrite" is founded, or in "Tartuffe," from whence Cibber derived the subject of his play.

In the same way the additions made by the actors to certain of Sheridan's comedies—such as Moses's redundant iterations of "I'll take my oath of that!" in "The School for Scandal," and Acres's misquotation of Sir Lucius's handwriting: "To prevent the trouble that might arise from our both undressing the same lady," in "The Rivals," are gags of such long standing, that they may date almost from the first

production of those works. Sheridan himself supervised the rehearsals, and took great pains to perfect the representation ; but, with other dramatists, he probably found himself much at the mercy of the players. He even withheld publication of "The School for Scandal," in order to prevent inadequate production of the comedy ; but this precaution was attended with the worst results. The stage long suffered from the variety of defective copies of the work that obtained circulation. The late Mr. John Bernard, the actor, in his amusing "Retrospections of the Stage," has confessed that, tempted by an addition of ten shillings a week to his salary, he undertook to compile, in a week, an edition of "The School for Scandal" for the Exeter Theatre, upon the express understanding that the manuscript should be destroyed at the end of the season. Bernard had three parts in his possession, for upon various occasions he had appeared as Sir Peter, as Charles, and as Sir Benjamin. Two members of the Exeter company were acquainted with the speeches of Old Rowley, Lady Teazle, and Mrs. Candour, while actors at a distance, upon his request, sent him by post the parts of Joseph and Sir. Oliver. With these materials, assisted by his general knowledge of the play, obtained from his having appeared many times in authentic versions of it, the compiler prepared a fictitious and piratical edition of "The School for Scandal,"

which fully served the purpose of the manager, and drew good houses for the remainder of the season.

Altogether, while few writers have done so much for the stage as Sheridan, few have met with less reverent treatment at the hands of the actors. "The Critic" has long been known in the theatre as a "gag-piece;" that is, a play which the performers consider themselves entitled to treat with the most merciless license. In this respect "The Critic" has followed the fate of an earlier work to which it owes much of its origin—"The Rehearsal," by the Duke of Buckingham. It is curious how completely Sheridan's own satire has escaped its due application. "This is always the way at the theatre," says Puff; "give these fellows a good thing and they never know when to have done with it." "The Critic" is not very often played nowadays; but every occasion of its revival is disfigured by the freedoms and buffoonery of its representatives. Modern costume is usually worn by Mr. Puff and his friends; and the anachronism has its excuse, perhaps, in the fact that the satire of the dramatist is as sound and relevant now as it was in the last century. And some modification of the original text might be reasonably permitted. For instance, the reference by name to the long-since departed actors, King, Dodd, and Palmer, and the once famous scene-painter, Mr. De Loutherbourg, must necessarily now

escape the comprehension of a general audience. But the idiotic interpolations, and the gross tomfoolery the actors occasionally permit themselves in the later scenes of the play, should not be tolerated by the audience upon any plea or pretext whatever.

One kind of gag is attributable to failure of memory or deficiency of study on the part of the player. "I haven't got my words ; I must gag it," is a confession not unfrequently to be overheard in the theatre. Incledon, the singer, who had been in early life a sailor before the mast, in the royal navy, was notorious for his frequent loss of memory upon the stage. In his time the word "vamp" seems to have prevailed as the synonym of gag. A contemporary critic writes of him : "He could never vamp, to use a theatrical technical which implies the substitution of your own words and ideas when the author's are forgotten. Vamping requires some tact, if not talent ; and Incledon's former occupation had imparted to his manners that genuine salt-water simplicity to which the artifices of acting were insurmountable difficulties." Incledon had, however, a never-failing resource when difficulty of this kind occurred to him, and loss of memory, and therefore of speech, interrupted his performances. He forthwith commenced a verse of one of his most popular ballads ! The amazement of his fellow-actors at this proceeding was, on its first adoption, very great indeed.

"The truth is, I forgot my part, sir," Incledon frankly explained to the perplexed manager, "and I could not catch the cue. I assure you, sir, that my agitation was so great that I was compelled to introduce a verse of 'Black-eyed Susan,' in order to gain time and recover myself." Long afterwards, when the occupants of the green-room could hear Incledon's exquisite voice upon the stage, they were wont to ask each other, laughingly, "Is he singing his music, or is he merely recollecting his words?"

That excellent comedian, the late Drinkwater Meadows, used to relate a curious gagging experience of his early life as a strolling player. It was at Warwick, during the race week. He was to play Henry Moreland, in "The Heir-at-Law," a part he had never previously performed, and of which, indeed, he knew little or nothing. There was no rehearsal, the company was "on pleasure bound," and desired to attend the races with the rest of Warwickshire. No book of the play was obtainable. A study of the prompt-book had been promised; but the prompter was not to be found; he was probably at the races, and his book with him. The representative of Henry Moreland could only consult with the actor who was to play Steadfast—for upon Steadfast's co-operation Moreland's scenes chiefly depend. "Don't bother about it," said Steadfast. "Never mind the book. I'll come

down early to the house, and as we're not wanted till the third act we can easily go over our scenes quietly together before we go on. We shall be all right, never fear. It's a race night ; the house will be full and noisy. Little of the play will be heard, and we need not be over and above particular as to the 'syls'" (syllables).

But Steadfast came down to the theatre very late, instead of early, and troubled with a thickness of speech and an unsteadiness of gait, that closely resembled the symptoms of intoxication. "Sober!" he said, in reply to some insinuation of his comrade, "I'm sober as a judge. I've been running to get here in time, and that's agitated me. I shall be all right when I'm on. Take care of yourself, and don't fret about me."

The curtain was up, and they had to face the foot-lights. Moreland waited for Steadfast to begin. Steadfast was gazing vacantly about him, silent save for irrepressible hiccups. The audience grew impatient, hisses became audible, and an apple or two was hurled upon the stage. Moreland, who had gathered something of the subject of the scene, found it absolutely necessary to say something, and began to gag : "Well, Steadfast" (*aside to him*, "Stand still, can't you?"), "here we are in England, nay, more, in London, its metropolis, where industry flourishes and idleness is punished." A pause for thought and reply ; with little

result. "Proud London, what wealth!" Another pause, and a hiccup from Steadfast. "What constant bustle, what activity in thy streets!" No remark could be extracted from Steadfast. It was necessary to proceed. "And now, Steadfast, my inestimable friend, that I may find my father and my Caroline well and happy, is the dearest, the sole aspiration of my heart!" Steadfast stared and staggered, then suddenly exclaiming gutturally, "Amen!" reeled from the stage, quickly followed by Henry Moreland, amid the derision and hisses of the spectators. "Treat you cruelly!" said Steadfast, incoherently in the wings. "Nothing of the sort. You quite confounded me with your correctness. You told me you didn't know your words, and I'll be hanged if you were not 'letter perfect.' It went off capitally, my dear boy, so now let's go over our next scene." But the manager deemed it advisable to omit from the play all further reference to Moreland and Steadfast.

To performers who gag either wantonly, or by reason of imperfect recollection of their parts, few things are more distressing than a knowledge that some one among the audience is in possession of a book of the play to be represented. Even the conscientious and thoroughly prepared actor is apt to be disconcerted when he hears the flutter of leaves being turned over in the theatre, and discovers that his speeches are being followed, line for

---

line and word for word, by critics armed with the author's text. On such occasions his memory is much inclined to play him false, and a sudden nervousness will often mar his best efforts. But, to the gagging player, a sense that his sins and failings are in this way liable to strict note and discovery, is grievously depressing. Some years ago a strolling company visited Andover, and courageously undertook to represent an admired comedy, with which they could boast but the very faintest acquaintance. Scarcely an actor, indeed, knew a syllable of his part. It was agreed that gag must be the order of the night, and that the performance must be "got through" anyhow. But the manager, eyeing and counting his house through the usual peephole in the curtain, perceived a gentleman in the boxes holding in his hands a printed copy of the play. The alarm of the company became extreme. A panic afflicted them, and their powers of gag were paralysed. They refused to confront the foot-lights. The audience grew impatient; the fiddlers were weary of repeating their tunes. Still the curtain did not rise. At length the manager presented himself with a doleful apologetic face. "Owing to an unfortunate accident," he said, "the company had left behind them the prompt-book of the play. The performance they had announced could not, therefore, be presented; unless," and here the speech was especially pointed to the gentleman

in the boxes, "any one among the audience, by a happy chance, happened to have brought to the theatre a copy of the comedy." The gentleman rose and said his book was much at the service of the manager, and it was accordingly handed to him. The players forthwith recovered their spirits; exposure of their deficiencies was no longer possible; and the performance passed off to the satisfaction of all concerned.

It has been suggested that gag is leniently, and even favourably considered by audiences; and it should be added that dramatists often connive at the interpolations of the theatre. For popular actors characters are prepared in outline, as it were, with full room for the embellishments to be added in representation. "Only tell me the situations; never mind about the 'cackle,'" an established comedian will observe to his author. "I'll 'fill it out,'" or "I shall be able to 'jerk it in,' and make something of the part." It is to be feared, indeed, that gag has secured a hold upon the stage, such as neither time nor teaching can loosen. More than a century ago, in the epilogue he supplied to Murphy's comedy, Garrick wrote:

Ye actors who act what our writers have writ,  
Pray stick to your part and spare your own wit;  
For when with your own you unbridle your tongue,  
I'll hold ten to one you are "all in the wrong!"

But this, with other cautioning of like effect,

has availed but little. The really popular actor gains a height above the reach of censure. He has secured a verdict that is scarcely to be impeached or influenced by exceptional criticism. Still it may be worth while to urge upon him the importance of moderation, not so much for his own art's sake—on that head over-indulgence may have made him obdurate—but in regard to his play-fellows of inferior standing. He is their exemplar; his sins are their excuses; and the license of one thus vitiates the general system of representation.

The French stage is far more hedged round with restrictions than is our own, and cultivates histrionic art with more scrupulous care. In its better works gag is not tolerated, although free range is accorded it in productions of the opera bouffe and vaudeville class. Here the wildest liberty prevails, and the gagging actor is recognised as exercising his privileges and his wit within lawful bounds. The Parisian theatres may, indeed, be divided into the establishments wherein gag is applauded, and those wherein it is abominated. By way of a concluding note upon the subject, let an authentic story of successful French gag be briefly narrated.

Potier, the famous comedian, was playing the leading part in a certain vaudeville, and was required, in the course of the performance, to sit at the table of a cheap café, and consume a bottle of beer. The beer was brought him

---

by a *figurant*, or mute performer, in the character of a waiter, charged with the simple duty of drawing the cork from the bottle, and filling the glass of the customer. Potier was struck with the man's neat performance of his task, and especially with a curious comical gravity which distinguished his manner, and often bestowed upon the humble actor an encouraging smile or a nod of approval. The man at length urged a request that he might, as he poured out the beer, be permitted to say a few words. Potier sanctioned the gag. It moved the laughter of the audience. Potier gagged in reply ; and there was more laughter. During later representations the waiter was allowed further speeches, relieved by the additional gag of Potier, until at the end of a week it was found that an entirely new scene had been added to the vaudeville ; and eventually the conversation between Potier and the *garçon*—not a line of which had been invented or contemplated by the dramatist—became the chief attraction of the piece. It was the triumph of gag. The *figurant*, from this modest and accidental beginning of his career as an actor, speedily rose to be famous. He was afterwards known to the world as ARNAL, one of the most admirable of Parisian *farceurs*.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### BALLETS AND BALLET-DANCERS.

DR. BARTEN HOLYDAY, in the notes to his translation of "Juvenal," published at Oxford in 1673, describes the Roman plays as being followed by an exodium "of the nature of a *jig* after a play, the more cheerfully to dismiss the spectators"—the word "*jig*" signifying in the doctor's time something almost of a *ballet divertissement*, with an infusion of rhyming songs or speeches delivered by the clown of the theatre to the accompaniment of pipe and tabor. Jigs of this kind commonly terminated the performances upon the Elizabethan stage, which otherwise consisted of one dramatic piece only. Mr. Payne Collier holds that these supplemental exhibitions probably originated with, and certainly depended mainly upon, the actors who supported the characters of fools and clowns in the regular dramatic representations. He points out that Tarleton, one of Queen Elizabeth's players, much famed

for his comicality, obtained great success by his efforts in jigs, and that, upon the showing of the tract entitled Tarleton's "News from Purgatory," jigs usually lasted for an hour. The precise nature of these entertainments cannot now be ascertained ; for although each jig had what may be called its *libretto*, which was duly printed and published when the popularity of the work so required, yet no specimen of any such performance is now extant. The Stationers' registers, however, contain entries in 1595 of two jigs described respectively as Phillips's "Jig of the Slippers," and Kempe's "Jig of the Kitchen-stuff Woman." Other jigs referred to by contemporary writers are "The Jig of the Ship" and "The Jig of Garlick." It may be assumed, therefore, that each jig possessed special characteristics in the nature of distinct plot and characters ; but in what respects "The Jig of the Kitchen-stuff Woman," let us say, differed from "The Jig of Garlick," or what was the precise story either was supposed to narrate, we must now be content to leave to the conjecture of the curious.

Probably dancing, as a dramatic entertainment, first came upon our stage in the form of these jigs. Of course, as a means of recreation among all ranks of people, it had thriven since a very remote period. Into the question of the state of dancing prior to the invention of any method of denoting by signs or characters the length or duration of sounds, we need

scarcely enter. Doubtless music was felt and appreciated by a sort of instinct long before it was understood scientifically, or duly measured out and written down upon a recognised system. If dancing is to be viewed as dependent upon its correspondence with measurable music, it must date simply from the invention of the *Cantus Mensurabilis*, attributed by some writers to Franco, the scholastic of Liége, who flourished in the eleventh century; and by others to Johannes de Muris, doctor of Sorbonne and a native of England, at the beginning of the fourteenth century.

There were dances of the court and dances of the people. The Morris dance, which seems to have been an invention of the Moors, had firmly established itself in England in the sixteenth century. The country dance was even of earlier date. The old Roundel or Roundelay has been described by ancient authorities as an air appropriate to dancing, and would indicate little more than a circular dance with the hands joined. Among the nobler and statelier dances in vogue at the court of the Tudors, were the Pavan (from *pavo*, a peacock), with the Galliard (a lighter measure, which was probably to the Pavan what in later years the Gavotte was to the Minuet), the Passamezzo, the Courant, and the Saraband. Sir John Elyot, who published in 1531 his book called "The Governor," wherein he avers that dancing by persons of both

sexes is a mystical representation of matrimony, mentions other dances, such as Bar-genettes and Turgyons, concerning which no explanation can be offered, except perhaps that the former may be derived from Berger, and be something of a shepherd's dance. There was also an esteemed dance called the Braule, in which several persons joining hands danced together in a ring, which was no doubt identical with the Branle or Brantle mentioned by Mr. Pepys in his description of a grand ball at Whitehall : "By-and-by comes the king and queen, the duke and duchess, and all the great ones ; and after seating themselves the king takes out the Duchess of York, and the Duke the Duchess of Buckingham ; the Duke of Monmouth my Lady Castlemaine ; and so other lords other ladies ; and they danced the Brantle. After that the king led a lady a single Coranto ; and then the rest of the lords, one after another, other ladies. Very noble it was and great pleasure to see. Then to country dances ; the king leading the first, which he called for. . . . The manner was, when the king dances, all the ladies in the room, and the queen herself, stand up ; and indeed he dances rarely and much better than the Duke of York."

Dancing, however, had degenerated in King Charles's time. In his "Table Talk," Selden writes of the matter in very quaint terms : "The court of England is much altered. At

a solemn dancing, first you had the grave measures, then the Corantoes and the Galliards, and this kept with ceremony ; and at length to Trenchmore and the cushion-dance ; then all the company dances, lord and groom, lady and kitchen-maid, no distinction. So in our court in Queen Elizabeth's time gravity and state were kept up. In King James's time things were pretty well. But in King Charles's time there has been nothing but Trenchmore and the cushion-dance, *omnium gatherum, toly polly, hoite cum toite.*" The Trenchmore was a lively dance, mention of which may be found in "The Pilgrim" and "Island Princess" of Beaumont and Fletcher, and in "The Rehearsal" of the Duke of Buckingham. The last editor of Selden, it may be noted, by altering the word to "Frenchmore," has considerably obscured the author's meaning.

In former times men of the gravest profession did not disdain to dance. Even the judges, in compliance with ancient custom, long continued to dance annually on Candlemas Day in the hall of Serjeants' Inn, Chancery Lane. Lincoln's Inn, too, had its revels—four in each year—with a master duly elected of the society to direct the pastimes. Nor were these "exercises of dancing," as Dugdale calls them, merely tolerated ; they were held to be "very necessary, and much conducing to the making of gentlemen more fit for their books at other times." Indeed, it appears that,

by an order made in James I.'s time, the junior bar was severely dealt with for declining to dance: "the under barristers were by decimation put out of commons for example's sake, because the whole bar offended by not dancing on Candlemas Day preceding, according to the ancient order of this society, when the judges were present; with this, that if the like fault were committed afterwards they should be fined or disbarred."

Gradually jigs disappeared from the stage. Even in 1632, when Shirley wrote his comedy of "Changes, or Love in a Maze," jigs had been discontinued at Salisbury Court Theatre, and probably at other private playhouses. Shirley complains that, instead of a jig at the end, a dance in the middle of the piece was now required by the spectators. Possibly that dance of all the *dramatis personæ* with which so many of the old comedies conclude is due to the earlier fashion of terminating theatrical performances by a jig.

With Sir William Davenant, as patentee and manager of the Duke's Theatre, stage dancing and singing acquired a more distinguished position among theatrical entertainments. It was Davenant's object, by submitting attractions of this nature to the public, to check the superiority enjoyed by Killigrew, the patentee of the Theatre Royal, and the comedians privileged to call themselves "His Majesty's Servants." Davenant,

---

indeed, first brought upon the English stage what were then called "dramatic operas," but what we should now rather designate "spectacles," including Dryden's version of "The Tempest," the "Psyche" of Shadwell, and the "Circe" of Charles Davenant, "all set off," as Cibber writes of them, "with the most expensive decorations of scenes and habits, with the best voices and dancers." Sir John Hawkins describes these productions as "musical dramas," or "tragedies with interludes set to music."

But as yet the ballet, or rather the ballet of action—which may be defined to be a ballet with a plot or story of some kind, told by means of dancing, dumb motions, and musical accompaniments—was not known upon our stage; and when an entertainment of this kind *did* make its appearance it was promptly designated a pantomime, and so has become confused with the distinct kind of performances still presented under that name at our larger theatres at Christmas time. "When one company is too hard for another," writes Cibber, "the lower in reputation has always been forced to exhibit some new-fangled foppery to draw the multitude after them;" which is, however, only a way of saying that managers need the stimulus of opposition to induce them to provide new entertainments. In 1721 there was great rivalry between Drury Lane—Cibber being one of its managers—and the theatre

then newly erected in Lincoln's Inn Fields. Of the "new-fangled foppery," which it now became necessary for the one theatre to resort to as a weapon of offence against its rival, singing and dancing had been effectual instances. But singing was not to be thought of under the circumstances; as Cibber writes: "At the time I am speaking of, our English music had been so discountenanced since the taste of Italian operas prevailed, that it was to no purpose to pretend to it. Dancing, therefore, was now the only weight in the opposite scale, and as the new theatres sometimes found their account in it, it could not be safe for us wholly to neglect it. To give even dancing, therefore, some improvement, and to make it something more than motion without meaning, the fable of Mars and Venus was formed into a connected presentation of dances in character, wherein the passions were so happily expressed, and the whole story so intelligibly told by a mute narrative of gesture only, that even thinking spectators allowed it both a pleasing and a rational entertainment." This was certainly a ballet of action, and it is remarkable that the production involved but a small outlay; the managers, distrusting its reception, did not venture "to decorate it with any extraordinary expense of scenes or habits." Great success, however, attended the performance, and from it is to be dated the establishment both of ballet and pantomime upon our stage. "From

this original hint, then, but every way unequal to it, sprang forth that succession of monstrous medleys that have so long infested the stage, and which arose upon one another alternately at both houses, outvying in expense, like contending bribes on both sides at an election, to secure a majority of the multitude.” Cibber indeed waxes very wrath over the matter, and appears to desire that lawful authority should “interpose to put down these poetical drams, these ginshops of the stage, that intoxicate its auditors and dishonour their understanding with a levity for which I want a name.” But Cibber’s anger is in truth very much that of a manager vying with the liberal outlay of a rival, and in such wise forced to expend large sums in costly entertainments.

At an earlier date ballet-dancers had been imported from France. Some time about 1704 the great Mr. Betterton and his company, suffering from insufficient patronage at the theatre in Lincoln’s Inn Fields, had been reduced to resort to “foreign novelties.” Three of the most famous dancers of the French Opera, L’Abbée, Balon, and Mademoiselle Subligny, were “at several times brought over at extraordinary rates to revive that sickly appetite which plain sense and nature had satiated.” In Paris, indeed, the ballet was very securely instituted. The Académie Royale de Musique et de Danse had been founded in 1669, and from that date the ballet, as an entertainment

of dancing only, may be said to have come into being. There had been earlier ballets, but these were of the nature of old English masques, and consisted of songs and spoken dialogues in addition to dances; the term *ballet*, it need hardly be explained, being derived from the Italian *ballata*, the parent of our own *ballad*. At first the French Opera or Academy suffered from the smallness of its troop; vocalists could be obtained from the church choirs, but for the ballet it was hard to find recruits; and sometimes young boys were pressed into the service, and constrained to personate nymphs, dryads, and shepherdesses—“*danseurs*,” writes a French historian of the Opera, “*qui sous un masque et des vêtements féminins, les formes arrondies par l'art et le coton, n'excitaient qu'un enthousiasme modéré.*” At court there was no lack of dancers of the gentler sex, however, and at court the ballet prospered greatly. A ballet performed in 1681 was at any rate strongly cast, since there appeared among the dancers Madame la Dauphine, the Princesse de Conti, and Mdlle. de Nantes, supported by the Dauphin, the Prince de Conti, and the Duc de Vermandois; but these distinguished personages probably sang more than they danced. Louis XIV. frequently figured in ballets, one of his favourite characters being the Sun in “*Flora*,” said to be the eighteenth ballet in which he had played a part. Lulli, the composer, director of the

Opera, paid great attention to the ballet, occasionally appearing as a dancer ; as a singer and comic actor he had already acquired fame. To Lulli has been attributed the introduction of rapid dancing, in opposition to the solemn and deliberate steps favoured by the court during the early part of the reign of Louis XIV. It may be added, that the king held out a measure of encouragement to such of his nobility and courtiers as were disposed to follow his example and exhibit upon the scene. "It is our pleasure," he says in the patent granted to the Abbé Perrin, the first director of the French Opera, 1669, "that all gentlemen and ladies may sing in the said pieces and representations of our Royal Academy, without being considered on that account to derogate from their letters of nobility or from their privileges, rights, and immunities." The dramatic ballet, or ballet of action, is said to have been invented by the Duchesse du Maine, whose theatrical entertainments at Sceaux rivalled the festivities of Versailles, and obtained the preference of many nobles of the court. The lady, however, unfortunately meddled with the Spanish conspiracy—she should have confined herself to the plots of ballets—and forthwith the establishment at Sceaux was broken up. In this way Mouret, her musical director, who also composed several operas and ballets for the Academy, suffered severe loss ; eventually he went mad and died in the lunatic asylum at Charenton.

Mademoiselle de Subligny came to England armed with letters of introduction from Thiriot and the Abbé Dubois to John Locke of all people ! Locke probably was not very sympathetic in regard to the lady's art, yet respect for his friends led him to bestow upon her due civility and attention ; according to Fontenelle, he constituted himself her *homme d'affaires*. Another dancer, Mademoiselle Sallé, whose charms and graces Voltaire had celebrated in verse, appeared in London with letters of introduction from Fontenelle to Montesquieu, then ambassador at the court of St. James's. It is clear that the ballet-dancers were becoming personages of real importance.

Mdlle. Sallé, it seems, achieved extraordinary success in the year 1734 at Covent Garden Theatre, which a French journal of that date describes curiously as the *Théâtre du Commun Jardin*. The lady was an admirable dancer, and brought with her complete dramatic ballets, the characters in which were appropriately dressed according to the time and place of the story they related ; for Mdlle. Sallé was a reformer in the matter of stage costumes. She discarded paniers and hoops and false hair. As Galatea in a ballet upon the story of Pygmalion, she wore nothing, we are told, "in addition to her bodice and under petticoats, but a simple robe of muslin draped after the manner of

a Greek statue." She won great applause, too, by her performance of Ariadne in a ballet called "Bacchus and Ariadne," the beauty of her dances, attitudes, and gestures, and her skill in depicting by movements without words, grief, anger, love, and despair, obtaining the warmest approval. She was patronised by the king, queen, and the royal family, and her benefit produced an "overflow" and something more; tickets were sold at most exorbitant prices, and the people fought for places both with swords and fists. There are stories, too, of purses full of gold being flung upon the stage, with showers of bonbons—not ordinary sugar-plums, but rouleaux of guineas tightly wrapped up in bank-notes. The dancer is said to have profited by her benefit to the extent of some £10,000. It must be owned, however, that the story of Mdlle. Sallé's success is of a very highly-coloured description, and can only be credited absolutely by persons largely endowed with credulity.

Satire, of course, found occupation in the successes of the ballet-dancers. In 1742 Hogarth published his "Charmers of the Age," a caricature of the aspect and attitudes of M. Desnoyer and the Signora Barberina, then performing at Drury Lane Theatre. A grotesque air was given to these artists, popularly regarded as personifications of grace and elegance, and a measured line was added to

the drawing that their leaps and bounds might be fairly estimated.

It was in France, however, that the *ballerina* secured her greatest triumph, and the *ballet d'action* attained its fullest vitality. The dancer became a power in the State, influencing princes, ministers, and people. Poets were her slaves, and oftentimes philosophers were caught in her toils. From Mdlle. la Fontaine of two centuries since, "*la première des premières danseuses*," who received the title of "*La Reine de la Danse*," there being at the time, however, but three other professional dancers in Paris, through a long line of most distinguished artists, the *ballerina* of to-day may trace her descent. But now, however, there is pause in her success, a cloud over her career. Indeed, it must be said, that for a generation almost there has been no new triumph registered of the ballet and its artists. Here the "*opera-dancers*," as they were once called, have certainly ceased to be. Once standing, as it were, on the tips of their toes, they supported opera upon their shoulders. But now there are no dancers at the opera. Euterpe has dispensed with the aid of Terpsichore; the ballet has fled from the boards of our lyric theatres. It has been said, indeed, that the *ballet d'action* has never been really naturalised in this country; that although it has thrived for a while, it was but an exotic, needing careful watching and tending. Still

---

it was for many years a most prosperous entertainment, especially at our Italian opera-house, and it is to be noted that its decline has not been confined to this country. Even in France, its natural home and head-quarters, ballet is by no means what it once was. It lives, perhaps, but in a fallen state. There is no *danseuse* now really of the first class. Has the ballet declined on this account, or is this to be ascribed to the decline of the ballet? Or can it be that the dances of the streets have overcome and ousted from their due position the dances of the stage?

After Mdlle. la Fontaine came Mdlles. Roland and Prévost; the famous Camargo and her rival Sallé, of whom some mention has already been made; Mdlle. Marie Madeleine Guimard, exquisitely graceful and fascinating, but of such slender proportions that she obtained the surname of "*le squelette des Grâces*," while witty but malicious, perhaps jealous, Sophie Arnould described her as "the spider;" Mafleury, who married Boeldieu, and Mercandotti, who married Mr. Ball Hughes, otherwise "Golden Ball," the greatest gambler of his time, which is saying a good deal; Noblet and the Ellslers; Pauline Leroux, who became the wife of Lafont, the most elegant actor of the modern theatre; Duvernay and Taglioni—to name no more, for we have now come to surviving artists—these are among the more famous of the "Reines de la Danse"

who have ruled absolutely at the Académie Royale of Paris and elsewhere.

In England ballet has enjoyed many triumphs, while it has nevertheless experienced sundry disasters. There was great trouble, for instance, at Drury Lane Theatre in 1755, when Mr. Garrick's "Chinese Festival" with its French dancers was sternly, even savagely, condemned by the audience. The manager was over-fond of spangles and spectacles, or inclined to over-estimate his public's regard for such matters, and a sharp but necessary lesson was read to him upon that occasion. Then he was very obstinate, and in such wise roused the British lion inordinately. He would not withdraw the play from his stage; promptly the audience determined that no stage should be left him upon which to represent either the "Chinese Festival" or anything else. Of course he had to yield at last, as managers must when playgoers are resolute; he had to live by pleasing, not displeasing. But he did not give way until there had been some six nights of uproar and riot. In vain did various noble lords and gentlemen friends of the management, and supporters of spectacle and the ballet, draw their swords, endeavouring to awe malcontents, to restore order, and to defend the theatre from outrage. The mob would have its way. The benches were torn up, the decorations torn down, chandeliers smashed, even scenes and properties were ruthlessly destroyed. There

was, indeed, a wild proposition rife at one time to fire the house and burn it to the ground. Garrick could but strike his flag, and yield up his "Chinese Festival." Still it was agreed that he had hesitated too long. The mob therefore repaired to Southampton Street, and smashed his window-panes, doing other mischief to his property there. He began even to tremble for his life, and from his friends in power obtained a guard of soldiery to protect him. Strange to say, on two of the nights of riot the king was present—a fact that did not in the least hinder or mitigate the violent demonstrations of the audience.

But it was not so much the ballet that gave offence as the ballet-dancers whom Garrick had brought from Paris. They were chiefly Swiss, but the audience believed them to be French, and at that time a very strong anti-Gallican feeling prevailed in the land. The relations between England and France were of an unfriendly kind ; the two countries were, indeed, on the eve of war. The French, by their conduct in America, had incurred the bitterest English enmity. It is true that Garrick had projected his spectacle months before this feeling had arisen. He was careful so to inform the public, and farther to state that his ballet-master, M. Noverre, and his sisters were Swiss and of a Protestant family ; his wife and her sister, Germans ; and that of the whole *corps de ballet*, sixty in number, forty were English.

But this availed not. The pit would not regard it, holding fast to their opinion that no management should bring over parley-voos and frog-eaters to take the bread out of English mouths. Peace was at length restored in Drury Lane, and the dancers sent back. The management lost £4,000 ; Garrick purchasing knowledge of his public at rather a high rate.

And in England the ballet had other enemies than those who concerned themselves in regard to the nationality of its professors. It was held by many to be, if an art at all—why, then, an art of a shocking kind ; they could see nothing in it but gross impropriety and unseemliness. Now, of course, the ballet has its vulnerable side—it almost needs, at any rate it has always assumed, a scantier style of dress than is otherwise in ordinary use. And then the movements of the dancer of necessity involve greater display of the human form than is required by the simpler acts of riding, walking, or sitting. In dancing it is inevitable that there should be swaying and bending of the figure, possibly waving to and fro of the arms, certainly some standing upon the toes, and raising of the nether limbs more or less high in the air. Bereft of these measures dancing could not be ; still here were matters upon which moralists, or persons who so styled themselves, were able greatly to enlarge, and concerning which Pharisees, who did not so

style themselves, but were such nevertheless, had much to say. Now just at the close of the last century the world was in very sad case ; society had gone on from bad to worse ; low life was of course lower than it had ever before been known to be, and high life was not nearly so high as it should have been. There was profligacy in very exalted places, and, indeed, dissoluteness and immorality everywhere. Thereupon, in 1798, a certain Bishop of Durham made a speech from his place in Parliament in regard to the wickedness of the period ; and especially he drew attention to the dancers of the opera-house. The excuse for the prelate's speech was a divorce bill ; for in those days the peers spiritual and temporal were much occupied in discussing and passing divorce bills —an employment of which they have only been deprived during quite recent years. His Grace took occasion to complain of the frequency of such bills, and, being a true patriot, charged the French Government with the despatch of agents to this country especially to corrupt our manners. “He considered it a consequence of the gross immoralities imported of late years into this country from France, the Directory of which country, finding that they were not able to subdue us by their arms, appeared as if they were determined to gain their ends by destroying our morals ; they had sent over persons to this country who made the most improper exhibitions in our

theatres." Now it was true that the manager of the opera-house at this time relied greatly upon the attractions of his ballet : operas and opera-singers having for a while lost favour with the impresario's subscribers and supporters. A leading dancer at this time, however, was an Englishwoman—an exception to the rule that makes every *première danseuse* of French origin—Miss Rose, reported to be of plain features, but of exquisite figure, and gifted with singular ease and grace of movement. It is possible that Miss Rose had adopted a scantier and lighter method of attire than had prevailed with preceding dancers. She had been caricatured, yet not very unkindly, by Gillray, the drawing bearing the motto, "No flower that blows is like the Rose." The bishop's speech was not without effect. Indeed, he had announced his intention upon some future day to move an address to the king praying that all opera-dancers might be ordered out of the kingdom, as people likely to destroy our morality and religion, and as very probably in the pay of France. The manager of the opera-house deemed it advisable to postpone his ballet of "Bacchus and Ariadne" until new and improved dresses could be prepared for it. Upon the entertainment being reproduced, it was found that there had been enlargement and elongation of the skirts of the performers, with the substitution of inoffensive white-silk stockings for the reprehensible hose of flesh-colour

that had originally been assumed. Of course much talk followed upon this, with great laughter and ridicule; caricatures of the spiritual peers and the opera-dancers abounded. In a drawing by Gillray, Miss Rose, with other *danseuses*, is depicted performing what is called “*La Danse à l'Evêque*;” the ladies have assumed, out of excessive regard for decorousness and the bishop's arguments, that apron of black silk which has long been thought peculiar to prelates. Another satirical illustration bore the title of “*Ecclesiastical Scrutiny*; or, The Durham Inquest on Duty.” Bishops were represented as attending in the dressing department of the opera-house; one is seen to be measuring the dancers' skirts with a tailor's yard; another arranges their stockings in an ungraceful fashion; while a third inspects their corsets, decreeing some change in the form of those articles of attire. The Bishop of Durham was further portrayed in another broadsheet as armed with his pastoral staff, and sturdily contesting hand to hand with the Spirit of Evil arrayed in ballet costume. In short, this subject of the bishops and the ballet-girls occupied and amused the public very considerably, and doubtless proved profitable, as an advertisement of his wares, to the manager of the opera-house.

Still the bishops kept a watchful eye upon the proceedings of the theatre. In 1805 there is record of a riot at the opera-house, “some

reforming bishops having warned the managers that if the performances were not regularly brought to a close before twelve o'clock on Saturday evenings, prosecutions would be commenced." Accordingly, the performances were shortened by the omission of an act of the ballet of "Ossian," greatly to the dissatisfaction of the audience, who assaulted Mr. Kelly, the manager, commenced an attack upon the chandeliers, benches, musical instruments, &c., and indeed threatened to demolish the theatre. The curtain had fallen at half-past eleven, which the audience thought much too early. Of a certain prelate it was recorded that he frequently attended the Saturday-night performances at the opera-house, and that upon the approach of midnight he was wont to stand up in his box holding out his watch at arm's length, by way of intimating to the spectators that it was time for them to depart and for the theatre to close. Of course this bishop could hardly have avoided seeing the ballet; but for whatever distress he may have endured on that account, a sense of his efforts to benefit his species, including of course the opera-dancers, no doubt afforded him a sufficient measure of compensation.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### CORRECT COSTUMES.

THE question of dress has always been of the gravest importance to the theatrical profession. It was a charge brought against the actors of Elizabeth's time, that they walked about the town in gaudy and expensive attire. The author of "The Return from Parnassus," first published in 1606, but held to have been written at an earlier date, specially refers to the prosperity, and the consequent arrogance of the players. He is believed to have had in view Alleyn or even Shakespeare :

Vile world that lifts them up to high degree,  
And treads us down in grovelling misery !  
England affords these glorious vagabonds,  
That carried erst their fardels on their backs,  
Coursers to ride on through the gazing streets,  
Sweeping it in their glaring satin suits,  
And pages to attend their masterships.

But it is clear that these "glorious vagabonds" were regardful that their dress should be splendid merely. There was no thought

then as to the costumes of the stage being appropriate to the characters represented, or in harmony with the periods dealt with by the dramatists. Nor did the spectators find fault with this arrangement. It did not disturb them in the least to find Brutus and Cassius, for instance, wearing much the same kind of clothes as Bacon and Raleigh. And in this way anachronisms of other kinds readily obtained pardon, if indeed they ever moved attention at all. Certainly the hero of an early Roman story should not have spoken of gunpowder, much less have produced a pistol from his belt ; but his conduct in this wise became almost reasonable, seeing that he did not wear a toga, but doublet and hose—the dress indeed of a gallant of Elizabeth's time.

It is only in quite recent times that the correctness of stage costumes has undergone systematic consideration, and been treated as a matter of real urgency, although occasional experiments in the direction of reform are to be found recorded in early accounts of the drama. Mr. Pepys describes his visit to the theatre in 1664, to see "Heraclius, or the Emperor of the East," Carlell's translation of Corneille, and notes, "the garments like Romans very well . . . at the beginning, at the drawing up of the curtain, there was the finest scene of the emperor and his people about him, standing in their fixed and different postures, in their Roman habits, above all that I ever saw at any of the

theatres." But attempts to be accurate in this way were only of an intermittent kind; any enduring amendment can hardly be found until we approach a period that is within the recollection of living playgoers. Mr. Donne, lately the Examiner of Plays, writes in one of his essays on the drama: "We have seen 'The Rivals' performed in a sort of chance medley costume—a century intervening between the respective attires of Sir Anthony and Captain Absolute;" and he adds, "we have seen the same comedy dressed with scrupulous attention to the date of the wigs and hoops; but we doubt whether in any essential respect that excellent play was a gainer by the increased care and expenditure of the manager." Sir Walter Scott had previously written: "We have seen 'Jane Shore' acted with Richard in the old English cloak, Lord Hastings in a full court dress, with his white rod like a Lord Chamberlain of the last reign, and Jane Shore and Alicia in stays and hoops. We have seen Miss Young act Zara, incased in whalebone, to an Osman dressed properly enough as a Turk, while Nerestan, a Christian knight, in the time of the Crusades, strutted in the white uniform of the old French guards!"

Even as late as 1842 a writer in a critical journal, reviewing a performance of "She Stoops to Conquer" at the Haymarket Theatre, reminds the representatives of Young Marlow and Hastings that the costumes they wear,

being "of the year 1842, accord but ill with those of 1772, assumed by the other characters." "The effect of the scene is marred by it," writes the critic. And ten years before Leigh Hunt had admitted into the columns of his *Tatler* many letters dwelling upon the defects of stage costume in regard to incongruousness and general lack of accuracy. One correspondent complains of a performance of "The Merry Wives of Windsor" at Covent Garden, in which Bartley had played Falstaff "in a dress belonging to the age of the first Charles;" Caius had appeared as "a doctor of the reign of William and Mary, with a flowing periwig, cocked hat, large cuffs, and ruffles;" while John Rugby's costume was that "of a countryman servant of the present day." Another remonstrant describes Kean as dressing Othello "more in the garb of an Albanian Greek than a Moor; Richard goes through the battle without armour, while Richmond is armed *cap-a-pie*; and Young plays Macbeth in a green and gilded velvet jacket, and carries a shield, until he begins to fight, and then throws it away." A third correspondent draws attention to "The School for Scandal" and Mr. Farren's performance of Sir Peter Teazle in a costume appropriate to the date of the comedy, the other players wearing dresses of the newest vogue. "Even Sir Oliver," it is added, "appeared in a fashionable modern drab great-

coat." In a note Leigh Hunt records his opinion that Mr. Farren was right, and that it was "the business of all the other performers to dress up to his costume, not for him to *wrong* himself into theirs," and adds, "there is one way of settling the matter which puts an end to all questions except that of immediate convenience and economy ; and this is to do as the French do, who rigidly adhere to the costume of the period in which the scene is supposed to take place. Something of immediate sympathy is lost, perhaps, by this system, for we can hardly admire a young beauty so much in the dress of our grandmothers as in such as we see our own charmers in ; but this defect is compensated by a sense of truth and propriety, by the very quaintness and novelty of the ancient aspect, and even by the information it conveys to us."

The condition of the Parisian stage in regard to its improved and splendid scenery, decorations, and accessories owed much to the special intervention and patronage of Louis XIV. Sir Walter Scott ascribes to Voltaire "the sole merit of introducing natural and correct costumes. Before his time the actors, whether Romans or Scythians, appeared in the full dress of the French court ; and Augustus himself was represented in a huge full-bottomed wig surmounted by a crown of laurel." Marmontel, however, claims to have had some share in this innovation, and also in the reform of the stage

method of declamation, which had previously been of a very pompous kind. Following his counsels, Mdlle. Clairon, the famous tragic actress, had ventured to play Roxana, in the Court Theatre at Versailles, "dressed in the habit of a Sultana, without hoop, her arms half-naked, and in the truth of Oriental costume." With this attire she adopted a simpler kind of elocution. Her success was most complete. Marmontel was profuse in his congratulations. "But it will ruin me," said the actress. "Natural declamation requires correctness of costume. My wardrobe is from this moment useless to me; I lose twelve hundred guineas worth of dresses! However, the sacrifice is made. Within a week you shall see me play Electra after nature, as I have just played Roxana." Marmontel writes: "From that time all the actors were obliged to abandon their fringed gloves, their voluminous wigs, their feathered hats, and all the fantastic paraphernalia that had so long shocked the sight of all men of taste. Lekain himself followed the example of Mdlle. Clairon, and, from that moment, their talents thus perfected, excited mutual emulation and were worthy rivals of each other."

Upon the English stage reform in this matter was certainly a matter of slow growth. A German gentleman, Christian Augustus Gottlieb Gœde by name, who published, in 1821, a long account of a visit he had recently made to

England, expresses in strong terms his opinions on certain peculiarities of its theatre. "You will never behold," he writes, "foreign actors dressed in such an absurd style as upon the London stage. The English, of all other nations the most superstitious worshippers of fashion, are, nevertheless, accustomed to manifest a strange indulgence for the incivilities which this goddess encounters from their performers. I have seen Mr. Cooke personating the character of Sir Pertinax McSycophant in 'The Man of the World,' in a buff coat of antique cut, and an embroidered waistcoat which might have figured in the court of Charles II.; though this play is of modern date and the actor must of course have been familiar with the current costume. In 'The Way to Keep Him,' Mr. C. Kemble acted the part of Sir Brilliant Fashion, a name which ought to have suggested to him a proper style of dress, in a frock absolutely threadbare, an obsolete doublet, long pantaloons, a prodigious watch-chain of steel, and a huge *incroyable* under his arm. This last article, indeed, was an appendage of 1802, but all the rest presented a genuine portrait of an indigent and coxcombical journeyman tailor. He must have known that pantaloons and an *incroyable* rumpled and folded together are incongruous articles of apparel—that no gentleman, much less Sir Brilliant Fashion, would make his appearance in a threadbare coat; and that steel

watch-chains, as the chronicles of the Birmingham manufactories plainly evince, have been out of date these fourscore years. Neither would he, I am perfectly convinced, parade in such a costume off the boards of the theatre. Why then should he choose to exhibit such a whimsical figure upon them ? May I venture to offer my own conjecture on the subject ? The real cause probably is that an absurd costume is perfectly fashionable upon the English stage ! ”

In reply to these and similar strictures there is nothing much to be said, unless it be that actors and audience alike were content with things as they were, and that now and then reforms had been attempted without, however, resulting in any particular success. Garrick had rendered the theatre invaluable services both as actor and as stage-manager, but he had been unable to effect any very beneficial change in the matter of dress. Indeed it seems probable that his attempt to appear as Othello had failed chiefly because he had followed Foote’s example and attired the character after a Moorish fashion, discarding the modern military uniforms in which Quin and Barry had been wont to play the part. The actor’s short stature, black face, and Oriental dress had reminded the audience of the turbaned negro pages in attendance upon ladies of quality at that period : “ Pompey with the tea-kettle,” as Quin had said, having possibly a plate of

Hogarth's present in his mind ; and the innovation, which was certainly commendable enough, was unfavourably received, even to incurring some contempt. Garrick's dress as Hotspur, "a laced frock and a Ramilies wig," was objected to, not for the good reason that it was inappropriate, but on the strange ground that it was "too insignificant for the character." A critic writing in 1759, while timidly advocating the amendment of stage dress, proceeds to doubt whether the reform would be "well received by audiences who have been so long habituated to such glaring impropriety and negligence in the other direction." Clearly alteration was a matter of some difficulty and not to be lightly undertaken.

It is well known that Garrick, in the part of Macbeth, wore a court suit of scarlet and gold lace, with, in the latter scenes of the tragedy, "a wig," as Lee Lewes the actor says in his *Memoirs*, "as large as any now worn by the gravest of our Barons of the Exchequer"—a similar costume being adopted by other Macbeths of that time—Smith and Barry for instance. When the veteran actor Macklin first played Macbeth in 1774, however, he assumed a "Caledonian habit," and although it is said the audience, when they saw "a clumsy old man, who looked more like a Scotch piper than a general and a prince of the blood, stumping down the stage at the head of an army, were generally inclined to laugh," still

the attempt at reform won considerable approbation. At that time it was held to be unquestionable that the correct costume of Macbeth should be that of the Highlander of the snuff shop ; but in later days it was discovered that even the tartan was an anachronism in such case, and that Macbeth and his associates must be clad in stripes, or plain colours. Even the bonnet with the eagle's feather, which Sir Walter Scott induced Kemble to substitute for his "shuttlecock" head-dress of ostrich plumes, was held to be inadmissible : the Macbeth of the antiquaries wore a conical iron helmet, and was otherwise arrayed in barbaric armour. But when Garrick first played Macbeth there were good reasons why the reform to be introduced by Macklin at a later date could not be attempted. Mr. Jackson, the actor from Edinburgh, who wrote a history of the Scottish stage, records that, being engaged at Drury Lane, he had resolved to make his first appearance in the part of Young Norval, in the tragedy of "Douglas." He writes : "I had provided for the purpose, before I left Edinburgh, a Highland dress, accoutred *cap-a-pie* with a broadsword, shield, and dirk, found upon the field of Culloden. But here, as usual, fresh impediments arose. Lord Bute's administration, from causes unnecessary here to enter upon, was become so unpleasing to the multitude, that anything confessedly Scotch awakened the embers of

discussion, and fed the flame of party. Mr. Garrick therefore put a direct negative at once upon my appearance in ‘*Douglas*;’ ‘*Oroonoko*’ was substituted in its place; for even to have performed the play of ‘*Douglas*’ would have been hazardous, and to have exhibited the Highland dress upon the stage, imprudence in the extreme. Could I have supposed, at that period,” asks Mr. Jackson—his book bears date 1793—“that I should live to see the tartan plaid universally worn in the politest circles, and its colours the predominating fashion among all ranks of the people in the metropolis?” What with the predisposition of the audience in favour of the conventional court suit, and afterwards their prejudice against the Scotch, on account of the ‘45 and Lord Bute, Garrick could hardly have assumed tartan in “*Macbeth*.” A picture by Dawes represents him in the battle scenes of the play as wearing a sort of Spanish dress—slashed trunks, a breastplate, and a high-crowned hat!

Macbeth, indeed, was never “dressed” agreeably to the taste of antiquarian critics, until the ornate revivals of the tragedy by Mr. Phelps, at Sadler’s Wells, in 1847, and by Mr. Charles Kean, at the Princess’s Theatre, some five years later. The costumes were of the eleventh century on each of these occasions, Mr. Phelps’s version of the play being so strictly textual, that the musical embellish-

ments, usually attributed to Locke, but in truth supplied by Leveridge, were discarded for the first time for very many years. Lady Macduff was restored to the list of *dramatis personæ*, from which she had so long been banished, and the old stage direction in the last scene, "enter Macduff with Macbeth's head upon a pole," was implicitly followed. But these revivals were a consequence of earlier reproductions of Shakespeare, with rigid regard to accuracy of costume, and general completeness of decoration. John Kemble had taken certain important steps in this direction, but his example had been bettered by his brother Charles, under whose management of Covent Garden, "King John" was produced, the costumes being supervised by Mr. Planché, and every detail of the representation receiving most attentive study. Great success attended this experiment, although, in the first instance, there had prevailed a strong inclination to deride as "stewpans" the flat-topped helmets worn by King John and his barons. After this, accuracy of costume, especially in relation to the plays of Shakespeare, became the favoured pursuit of managers. Mr. Macready ventured upon various revivals, archaic and decorative, at Covent Garden and Drury Lane; Mr. Phelps followed suit at Sadler's Wells, and Mr. Charles Kean at the Princess's, until it seemed that correctness of attire, and splendour of scenery and appointments, could no

further be carried ; indeed alarm arose lest the drama should perish altogether under the weight of upholstery and wardrobe it was doomed to bear. Already the art of acting, in its more heroic aspects, had undergone decline ; there was danger of the player sinking to the level of a mere dummy or lay-figure for the exhibition of costly raiment.

Still, these luxurious illustrated editions of Shakespeare were attractive and popular, although it is probable that the audience esteemed them less for their archæological merits than on account of their charms as spectacles. Indeed, few in the theatre could really be supposed to prize the cut of a tunic, or the shape of a head-dress, or to possess such minute information as enabled them to appraise the worth, in that respect, of the entertainment set before them. However, pages from the history of costume were displayed, indisputable in their correctness, and those who listed might certainly gather instruction. Here was to be seen King John in his habit as he lived ; here appeared the second and third Richards, King Henry, Queen Katherine, and Wolsey ; now was presented London, with its inhabitants in the Middle Ages ; now, the Venice of Shylock ; and, anon, the Bithynia of the days of King Leontes. The spectators applauded the finery and the skill of the embellishments ; and their favourable verdict upon these counts carried with it, presumably,

approval of the players, and, perhaps, a measure of homage to Shakespeare.

The passion for extreme decoration, in relation both to scenery and dresses, has not known abatement of late years, though it has sought other subjects than those supplied by Shakespeare—most unwittingly; for never could the poet have even dreamed of such a thing as “a correct and superb” revival. But the question, as to the benefit done to histrionic art by these representations, remains much where it was. To revert to the shortcomings of the Elizabethan stage would be, of course, impossible; the imaginations of the audience would now steadily refuse to be taxed to meet the absence of scenery, the incongruity of costumes, and the other deficiencies of the early theatre. Some degree of accuracy our modern playgoers would demand, if they disdained or disregarded minute correctness. Certainly, there would be dissatisfaction if a player, assuming the part of King Henry VIII., for instance, neglected to present some resemblance to the familiar portraits of the king by Holbein. Yet the same audience would be wholly undisturbed by anachronisms touching the introduction of silken stockings, or velvet robes, the pattern of plate armour, or the fashion of weapons. After all, what is chiefly needed to preserve theatrical illusion is a certain harmony of arrangement, which shall be so undemonstratively complete as to escape consideration;

no false notes must be struck to divert attention from the designs of the dramatist and from his interpreters, the players ; and to these the help derived from scenery and dresses should always be subordinated. Yet, when has the theatre been thus ordered, or have audiences been so disciplined ? Beaumont, probably, had good reason for writing to Fletcher, concerning a performance of his " Faithful Shepherdess "—

Nor want they those who as the boy doth dance  
Between the acts, will censure the whole play ;  
Some like if the wax lights be new that day ;  
But multitudes there are whose judgment goes  
Headlong according to the actors' clothes.

The playgoers of Garrick's time, and long afterwards, were habituated to the defective system of theatrical costume—had grown up with it. To them it was part of the stage as they had always known it, and they saw no reason for fault-finding. And it is conceivable that many plays were little affected by the circumstance that the actors wore court suits. It was but a shifting of the period of the story represented, a change of venue ; and Romeo, in hair powder, interested just as much as though he had assumed an auburn wig. The characters were, doubtless, very well played, and the actors appeared, at any rate, as " persons of quality." In historical plays one would think the objection to anachronism much more obvious ; for here distinct events and personages and settled dates were dealt with.

But there was an understanding that stage costume was purely a conventional matter—and so came to be tolerated most heterogeneous dressing: the mixing together of the clothes of almost all centuries and all countries, in a haphazard way, just as they might be discovered, heaped up in a theatrical wardrobe. It was not a case of simple anachronism; it was compound and conflicting. Still, little objection was offered.

And even a critic above quoted, writing in 1759, and proposing greater accuracy in the costumes of historical plays, refrains from suggesting that comedy should be as strictly treated. He even advances the opinion that the system of dress in vogue at the date of the play's production should be disregarded according to "the fluctuations of fashion." "What should we think," he demanded, "of a Lord Foppington now dressed with a large full-bottomed wig, laced cravat, buttons as large as apples, or a Millamant with a head-dress four stories high?" And there is something to be said for this view. The writer of comedy pictures manners, and these do not change immediately. His portraits remain recognisable for a generation, probably. Lord Foppington had descendants, and his likeness, with certain changes of dress, might fairly pass for theirs for some time. But, of course, the day must arrive when the comedy loses value as a reflection of manners; it is interesting as

a transcript of the past, but not of the present. It is doubtless difficult to fix this date with precision; but when that has been accomplished the opportunity of the antiquarian costumier has arrived.

Macklin, who reformed the costume of Macbeth, also, it should be recorded, was the first actor who "dressed Iago properly." It seems that formerly the part was so attired or "made up" that Iago's evil nature was "known at first sight; but it is unnatural to suppose that an artful villain like him would choose a dress which would stigmatise him to every one. I think," adds the critic, "that as Cassio and he belong to one regiment they should both retain the same regimentals." By way of final note on the subject is subjoined the opinion of Mr. Disraeli, recorded in *Vivian Grey*, touching the dress that should be worn by Othello. "In England we are accustomed to deck this adventurous Moor in the costume of his native country—but is this correct? The Grand Duke of Reisenberg thought not. Othello was an adventurer; at an early age he entered, as many foreigners did, into the service of Venice. In that service he rose to the highest dignities—became general of her armies and of her fleets; and finally the viceroy of her favourite kingdom. Is it natural to suppose that such a man should have retained, during his successful career, the manners and dress of his original country? Ought we not rather to

admit that, had he done so, his career would in fact not have been successful ? In all probability he imitated to affectation the manners of the country which he had adopted. It is not probable that in such, or in any age, the turbaned Moor would have been treated with great deference by the common Christian soldier of Venice—or, indeed, that the scandal of a heathen leading the armies of one of the most powerful of European states, would have been tolerated for an instant by indignant Christendom. . . . Such were the sentiments of the Grand Duke of Reisenberg on this subject, a subject interesting to Englishmen ; and I confess I think they are worthy of attention. In accordance with his opinion, the actor who performed Othello appeared in the full dress of a Vénétian magnifico of the Middle Ages : a fit companion for Cornaro, or Grimani, or Barberigo, or Foscari.”

## CHAPTER XV.

HARLEQUIN AND CO.

WHAT is called the “legitimate drama” has always found in pantomime just such a rival and a relative as Gloucester’s lawfully-begotten son Edgar was troubled with in the person of his base-born brother Edmund. The authentic professor of histrionic art may even have been addressed occasionally by his illicit opponent in something like Edmund’s very words :

Why bastard ? wherefore base ?  
When my dimensions are as well compact,  
My mind as generous and my shape as true,  
As honest madam’s issue ? Why brand they us  
With base ? with baseness ? with bastardy ? base, base ? . . .  
Legitimate Edgar, I must have your land;  
Our father’s love is to the bastard Edmund  
As to the legitimate : fine word “legitimate.”

The antagonism between the two forms of entertainment is by no means of to-day merely. Shakespeare noted with an air of regret that “inexplicable dumb shows and noise” enjoyed public admiration in his day,

and, centuries before, the audiences of the ancient actors underwent reduction by reason of the rival performances of the dancers, mimes, and mountebanks of the period. The Roman people began in time to care less for the comedians than for the mimes. Some of these had the art to represent the action of an entire play, such as the "Hercules Furens," to the delight and astonishment of the spectators. Augustus is said to have reconciled the Romans to many severe imposts by recalling their favourite mime and dancer, Pylades, who had been banished for pointing with his finger at a spectator who had offended him. The "dumb shows" referred to by Hamlet, however, were not so much distinct entertainments as excrescences upon the regular performances of the theatre; interpolations to win the applause of the groundlings. Pantomime proper was a development of ballet; the result of an endeavour to connect one dance with another by means of a slight string of story. In England systematised entertainments of dancing and singing were brought upon the English stage by Davenant, "to check," we are told, "the superiority enjoyed by the royal comedians in their exhibition of the regular drama." "When one company is too hard for another," remarks Cibber, "the lower in reputation has always been found to exhibit some new-fangled foppery to draw the multitude after them."

English singing, however, declined in public favour when the taste for Italian opera arose here about the close of the seventeenth century, and dancing became then the only feasible counter-attraction to the regular drama. Thereupon "the fable of Mars and Venus was formed into a connected presentation of dances in character, wherein the passions were so happily expressed, and the whole story so intelligibly told by a mute narrative of gesture only, that even thinking spectators allowed it both a pleasing and a rational entertainment." The first ballets were produced at small cost; but by-and-by the managers increased more and more their expenditure on account of the dancers, until the rival theatres were compared to candidates at an election, competing in bribery to secure "a majority of the multitude." Cibber, while defending himself against Pope's attack upon him in "The Dunciad," admitted that he had not virtue enough to starve by opposing the public, and pleaded guilty to the charge of having as a manager produced very costly ballets and spectacles. At the same time he condemned the taste of the vulgar, avowed himself as really on the side of truth and justice, and compared himself to Henry IV. of France changing his religion in compliance with the wishes of his people! Further he urged, "Truth may complain and merit murmur with what justice it may, the few may never be a match for the

many, unless authority shall think fit to put down these poetical drams—these gin-shops of the stage that intoxicate its auditors and dishonour their understanding with a levity for which I want a name."

Hitherto the ballets had dealt exclusively with mythological subjects, and nothing of the Italian element comprised in modern pantomime had been apparent in our stage performances. It is probable that even upon their first introduction to our theatre the real significance of the characters of ancient Italian comedy was never wholly comprehended by the audience. Few could have then cared to learn that types of national or provincial peculiarity, representatives of Venice, Bologna, Naples, and Bergamo, respectively, were intended by the characters of Pantaloone, the Doctor, Scapin, and Harlequin. Yet, in the first instance, the old Italian comedy was brought upon the English stage with some regard for its original integrity, and the characters were personated by regular actors rather than by mimes. So far back as 1687 Mrs. Behn's three-act farce of "The Emperor of the Moon" was produced, and in this appeared the characters of Harlequin and Scaramouch, who play off many tricks and antics, while there are parts in the play corresponding with the pantaloone, the lover, and the columbine of more modern pantomime. But at this date, and for some years, harlequin

was not merely the sentimentalist, attitudiniser, and dancer he has since become. He was true to his Italian origin, and very much the kind of harlequin encountered on his native soil and described by Addison : " Harlequin's part is made up of blunders and absurdities ; he is to mistake one name for another, to forget his errands, and to run his head against every post that appears in his way." Marmontel describing, however, the harlequin of the French stage, writes : " His character is a mixture of ignorance, simplicity, cleverness, stupidity, and grace ; he is a kind of sketch of a man, a tall child, yet with gleams of reason and wit, and all whose mistakes and follies have something arch about them. The true mode of representing him is to give him suppleness, agility, the playfulness of a kitten, with a certain grossness of appearance, which renders his conduct more absurd ; his part is that of a patient, faithful valet, always in love, always in hot water, either on his master's or his own account, troubled and consoled as easily as a child, and whose grief is as entertaining as his joy."

It will be observed that the character thus described more nearly resembles the modern clown than the modern harlequin, and the early harlequins of the English stage were therefore naturally played by the low comedians of the time. The harlequin of Mrs. Behn's farce was personated by an actor named

Leigh, who was followed in the part by Pinkethman, a comedian much commended by Steele in the "Tatler," although Cibber accounted him inferior to Leigh. Pinkethman was found so amusing in his motley coat, and what Cibber calls "that useless unmeaning mask of a black cat," that certain of his admirers fancied that much of the drollery and spirit of his grimace must be lost by his concealment of his face. Yielding to their request, therefore, he played one night without his mask. But the result was disappointing. "Pinkethman," it is recorded, "could not take to himself the shame of the character without being concealed; he was no more harlequin; his humour was quite disconcerted; his conscience could not with the same effrontery declare against nature without the cover of that unchanging face. Without that armour his courage could not come up to the bold strokes that were necessary to get the better of common-sense."

Early in the eighteenth century the characters of the Italian comedy were introduced into ballets. Harlequin ceased to speak, and assumed by degrees a more romantic, a less comic air, and the peculiarities of modern pantomime were gradually approached. Rich, the manager of the theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields and afterwards of Covent Garden—the "immortal Rich" of "The Dunciad" became famous for his pantomimes, and under the name of Lun acquired great distinction as a

harlequin. Pope handles severely the taste of the town in regard to pantomimes, and the excessive expenditure incurred on account of them. "Persons of the first quality in England" were accused of attending at these representations twenty and thirty times in a season. The line "Lo ! one vast egg produces human race," had reference to the trick, introduced by Rich, of hatching harlequin out of a large egg. This was regarded as a masterpiece of dumb show, and is described in glowing terms by a contemporary writer. "From the first chipping of the egg, his receiving motion, his feeling the ground, his standing upright, to his quick harlequin trip round the empty shell, through the whole progression, every limb had its tongue and every motion a voice." Rich was also famed for his "catching a butterfly" and his "statue scene;" his taking leave of columbine was described as "graceful and affecting;" his trick of scratching his ear with his foot like a dog was greatly admired; while in a certain dance he was said to execute 300 steps in a rapid advance of three yards only. A writer in *The World* (1753) ironically recommended the managers to dispense entirely with tragedy and comedy, and to entertain the town solely with pantomime, people of taste and fashion having given sufficient proof that they thought it the highest entertainment the stage was capable of affording—"the most innocent we are sure it

is, for where nothing is said and nothing meant very little harm can be done." Garrick, it was fancied, might start a few objections to this proposal ; " but," it was added, " with those universal talents which he so happily possesses, it is not to be doubted but he will in time be able to handle the wooden sword with as much dignity and dexterity as his brother Lun."

Possibly harlequin became a mute, in the first instance, to suit the limited capacity in the matter of elocution of some such performer as Rich ; or the original dumbness of the harlequinade figures may be attributable to the strictness with which of old the theatres, unprotected by patents, were prohibited from giving *spoken* entertainments. What were then called the " burletta houses " were permitted performances of dancing, singing, tumbling, juggling—anything, indeed, but *speech* unaccompanied by music. Delpini, the clown at the unpatented Royalty Theatre, was actually committed to prison for exclaiming " Roast Beef ! " the unlucky utterance not being assisted by the orchestra. The popularity of these performances was beyond question, however, and, in time, the mute drove the speaking harlequin from the stage : the great theatres probably copying the form of pantomimes of the minor houses, as they were by-and-by also induced to follow the smaller stages in the matter of their melodramas and burlettas.

The comic "openings" known to modern times had no place in Rich's pantomimes. These were divided into two parts, the first being devoted to scenic surprises and magical transformations of a serious nature, and the last to all kinds of comic antics, tumbling and dancing. No allusions to passing events or the follies of the day were, however, introduced. Leigh Hunt, writing in 1831, complained that pantomimes were not what they had been ; and that the opening, "which used to form merely a brief excuse for putting the harlequinade in motion," had come to be a considerable part of the performance. Harlequin lost his place as the chief member of the pantomimic troop, when the part of clown was entrusted to the famous Grimaldi, "the Garrick of clowns," as Theodore Hook called him. This great comic artist devised the eccentric costume still worn by clowns—the original whiteness of the Pierrot's dress being used as a groundwork upon which to paint variegated spots, stars, and patches ; and nearly all the "comic business" of modern harlequinades is of his invention. The present dress of the harlequin dates from the beginning of the century only. Until then the costume had been the loosely fitting parti-coloured jacket and trousers to be seen worn by the figures in Watteau's masquerade subjects. In the pantomime of "Harlequin Amulet ; or, The Magic of Mona," produced at Drury Lane in 1800, Mr. James

Byrne, the ballet master, the father of the late Mr. Oscar Byrne, appeared as harlequin in "a white silk shape, fitting without a wrinkle," into which the coloured silk patches were woven, the whole being profusely covered with spangles, and presenting a very sparkling appearance. The innovation was not resisted, but was greatly applauded, and Mr. Byrne's improved attire is worn by all modern harlequins.

Some eighty years ago John Kemble, addressing his scene-painter in reference to a forthcoming pantomime, wrote: "It must be *very short, very laughable, and very cheap.*" If the great manager-actor's requirements were fairly met, it is certain that the entertainment in question was of a kind very different to the pantomime of our day—a production that is invariably very long, rarely laughable, and always of exceeding costliness. Leigh Hunt complained in 1831 that pantomimes were not what they had been, and that the opening, "which used to form merely a brief excuse for putting the harlequinade in motion," had come to be a considerable part of the performance. In modern pantomime it may be said that the opening is everything, and that the harlequinade is deferred as long as possible. "Now the fun begins," used to be the old formula of the playbills announcing the commencement of the harlequinade, or what is still known in the language of the theatre as the "comic

business." Perhaps experience proved that in point of fact "the fun" did not set in at the time stated ; at any rate the appearance of harlequin and clown is now regarded by many of the spectators as a signal for the certain commencement of dreariness, and as a notice to quit their seats. The pantomime Kemble had in contemplation, however, was of the fashion Leigh Hunt looked back upon regretfully. Harlequin was to enter almost in the first scene. "I have hit on nothing I can think of better," writes Kemble, "than the story of King Arthur and Merlin, and the Saxon Wizards. The pantomime might open with the Saxon witches lamenting Merlin's power over them, and forming an incantation by which they create a harlequin, who is supposed to be able to counteract Merlin in all his designs for the good of King Arthur. If the Saxons came on in a dreadful storm, as they proceeded in their magical rites, the sky might brighten and a rainbow sweep across the horizon, which, when the ceremonies are completed, should contract itself from either end and form the figure of harlequin in the heavens; the wizards may fetch him down how they will, and the sooner he is set to work the better. If this idea for producing a harlequin is not new do not adopt it."

The main difficulty of pantomime-writers at this time seems to have been the contriving of some new method of bringing harlequin upon

the scene. Now he was conjured up from a well, now from a lake, out of a bower, a furnace, &c.; but it was always held desirable to introduce him to the spectators as early as might be. In Tom Dibdin's pantomime of "Harlequin in his Element; or, Fire, Water, Earth, and Air," produced at Covent Garden in 1807, the first scene represents "a beautiful garden, with terraces, arcades, fountains," &c. The curtain "rises to a soft symphony." Aurino, the Genius of Air, descends on a light cloud; Aquina, the Spirit of Water, rises from a fountain; Terrena, the Spirit of Earth, springs up a trap; and Ignoso, the Genius of Fire, descends amid thunder from the skies. These characters interchange a little rhymed dialogue, and discuss which of them is the most powerful. Ignoso is very angry, and threatens his associates. Terrena demands:

Fire, why so hot? Your bolts distress not me,  
But injure the fair mistress of these bowers,  
Whose sordid guardian would her husband be,  
For lucre, not for love.  
Rather than quarrel, let us use our powers,  
And gift with magic aid some active sprite,  
To foil the guardian and the girl to right.

The proposition is agreed to, and thereupon, according to stage direction, "Harlequin is produced from a bed of parti-coloured flowers, and the magic sword is given to him." He is addressed by each of the spirits in turn. Then we read: "Ignoso sinks. Aquina strikes the fountains; they begin playing. Terrena strikes

the ground ; a bed of roses appears. Harlequin surveys everything, and runs round the stage. Earth sinks in the bed of roses, and Water in the fountains. Air ascends in the car. Columbine enters dancing ; is amazed at the sight of Harlequin, who retires from her with equal surprise ; they follow each other round the fountain in a *pas de deux*. They are surprised by the entrance of Columbine's guardian, who comes in preceded by servants in rich liveries. Clown, as his running footman, enters with a lap-dog. Old man takes snuff ; views himself in a pocket-glass. Clown imitates him ; old man sees Harlequin and Columbine, and pursues them round the fountains, but the lovers go off, followed by Sir Amoroso and servants." The lovers are pursued through some sixteen scenes, till the fairies unite them in the Temple of the Elements. At this time, it is to be noted, the last scene held that place as a spectacle, which is now enjoyed by the transformation scene. Throughout the pantomime the relations of Clown and Pantaloons, or Sir Amoroso, the guardian (he is called by these titles indifferently), as master and servant are carefully preserved.

Although in "Harlequin in his Element" there appears little answering to the modern "opening," and no "transformation" of the characters, yet both these peculiarities are to be discovered in the famous pantomime of "Mother Goose," which was presented to the

town a year sooner, and was the work of the same author. In "Mother Goose" there are four opening scenes and fifteen of harlequinade—the pantomime of to-day generally reversing this arrangement of figures. Colin, a young peasant, is changed to Harlequin ; Collinette, his mistress, to Columbine ; Squire Bugle to Clown ; and Avaro, an old miser, to Pantaloone. In the harlequinade are scenes of Vauxhall Gardens, and the exterior of St. Dunstan's Church, Fleet Street, with a crowd assembled to see the figures strike the bell (these figures were subsequently removed to the Marquis of Hertford's villa, in the Regent's Park), a grocer's shop and post-office, an inn, a farmyard, &c. ; while many of the tricks are identical with those still delighting holiday audiences ; but the allusions to political events and current topics, so dear to modern purveyors of burlesque and pantomime, have no place in the entertainment. The doggerel and songs of the opening are without puns or pretensions of a comic kind, and must certainly be described as rather dull reading.

Without doubt the modern pantomime opening owes much of its form to modern burlesque and extravaganza, of which Mr. Planché may be regarded as the inventor, although it must be stated on his behalf, that his followers have wofully degenerated from the example set by his productions of a half century ago. Mr. Planché's first burlesque was produced at

Drury Lane in 1818, and was called “Amoroso, King of Little Britain.” “The *author!*!” wrote a fierce critic in “Blackwood”—“but even the shoeblocks of Paris call themselves *marchands de cirage!*” Mr. Planché had compensation, however. His burlesque was quoted in a leading article in *The Times*; the King of Little Britain’s address to his courtiers, “My lords and gentlemen—get out!” was alluded to in relation to a royal speech dissolving Parliament. “Amoroso” was a following of “Bombastes Furioso.” But, by-and-by, Mr. Planché was to proceed to “Pandora,” “Olympic Revels,” “Riquet with the Tuft,” and the other productions, the manner and character of which have become identified with his name. Gradually he created a school of burlesque-writers indeed; but his scholars at last rebelled against him and “barred him out,” a fate to which schoolmasters have been often liable. Still burlesque of the worthy Planché form, and of the spuriously imitative kind, which copied, and at the same time degraded him, grew and thrrove, and at last invaded the domains of pantomime. “Openings” fell into the hands of burlesque-writers, their share in the pantomime work ceasing with the transformation scene; punning rhymes and parodies, and comic dances, delayed the entrance of clown and harlequin, till at last their significance and occupation seem almost to have gone from them. The old language

of gesture, with perhaps the occasional resort to a placard to supplement and interpret the "dumb motions" of the performers (a concession to, or an evasion of the old prohibition of speech in the "burletta houses"), vanished from the stage. The harlequinade characters ceased to take part in the opening, and that joy to youthful cunning of detecting the players of the later scenes in the disguises of their earlier presentment—harlequin, by the accidental revelation of parti-colour and spangles, and clown by the chance display of his motley trunks and hose—was gone for ever. Smart young ladies in the blonde wigs, the very curt tunics, the fleshings and the high heels of burlesque, appeared in lieu of these; and the spectacle of the characters in the opening loosening tapes and easing buttons in good time to obey the behest of the chief fairy, and transform themselves for harlequinade purposes, became an obsolete and withdrawn delight.

Yet what were called "speaking pantomimes," that is, pantomimes supplied to an unusual extent with spoken matter, were occasionally produced in times long past. Hazlitt mentions, only to condemn however, an entertainment answering to this description. It was called "Shakespeare *versus* Harlequin," and was played in 1820. It would seem to have been a revival of a production of David Garrick's. "It is called a speak-

ing pantomime," writes Hazlitt; "we had rather it had said nothing. It is better to act folly than to talk it. The essence of pantomime is practical absurdity keeping the wits in constant chase, coming upon one by surprise, and starting off again before you can arrest the fleeting 'phantom': the essence of this piece was prosing stupidity remaining like a mawkish picture on the stage, and overcoming your impatience by the force of *ennui*. A speaking pantomime such as this one is not unlike a flying waggon," &c. &c.

"Harlequin *versus* Shakespeare" was generally voted dreary and a failure. A. Leigh Hunt mentions another "speaking pantomime," called "Harlequin Pat and Harlequin Bat; or, The Giant's Causeway," produced at Covent Garden in 1830. "A speaking pantomime," Hunt objects, "is a contradiction in terms. It is a little too Irish: It is as much as to say, 'Here you have all dumb-show talking.' This, to be sure, is what made Grimaldi's talking so good. It was so rare and seasonable that it only proved the rule by the exception. The clowns of late speak too much. To keep on saying at every turn, 'Hallo!' or 'Don't!' or 'What do you mean?' only makes one think that the piece is partly written and not written well." We may note that Mr. Tyrone Power, the famous Irish comedian, appeared as harlequin in this pantomime, assisted by a skilled "double" to accomplish the indispensable

attitudinising, dancing, and jumping through holes in the wall. Power abandoned his share in the performance after a few nights, however, and the part was then undertaken by Mr. Keeley, and subsequently by Mr. F. Matthews.

Gradually, speaking was to be heard more and more in pantomimes ; and some thirty years ago an attempt was made to invest this form of theatrical entertainment with peculiar literary distinction. The staff of *Punch*, at that time very strong in talent, provided Covent Garden with a pantomime upon the subject of King John and Magna Charta. The result, however, disappointed public expectation. *Punch* was not seen to advantage in his endeavour to assume the guise of harlequin. At a later date, Mr. Keeley, at the Lyceum, produced a fairy extravaganza of the Planché pattern called "The Butterfly's Ball," and tacked on to it several "comic scenes" for clown and pantaloon. The experiment was not wholly successful in the first instance ; but by degrees the burlesque leaven affected the pantomimic constitution, and pantomimes came to be what we find them at present. The custom of interrupting the harlequinade by the exhibition of dioramic views, at one time contrived annually by Clarkson Stanfield, expired about twenty years ago ; as a substitute for these came the gorgeous transformation scenes, traceable to the grand displays which were wont to conclude Mr. Planché extravaganzas at the Lyceum

Theatre, when under the management of Madame Vestris. Mr. Planché has himself described how the scene-painter came by degrees to take the dramatist's place in the theatre. "Year after year Mr. Beverley's powers were taxed to outdo his former outdoings. The last scene became the first in the estimation of the management. The most complicated machinery, the most costly materials were annually put into requisition, until their bacon was so buttered it was impossible to save it. As to me, I was positively painted out. Nothing was considered brilliant but the last scene. Dutch metal was in the ascendant." This was fifteen years ago. But any change that may have occurred in the situation has hardly been for the better. The author ousted the mute ; and now the author, in his turn, is overcome by the scene-painter, the machinist, and the upholsterer.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### “ GOOSE.”

THE bird which saved the Capitol has ruined many a play. “Goose,” “to be goosed,” “to get the big-bird,” signifies to be hissed, says the “Slang Dictionary.” This theatrical cant term is of ancient date. In the induction to Marston’s comedy of “What You Will,” 1607, it is asked if the poet’s resolve shall be “struck through with the blirt of a goose breath?” Shakespeare makes no mention of goose in this sense, but he refers now and then to hissing as the playgoers’ method of indicating disapproval. “Mistress Page, remember you your cue,” says Ford’s wife in “The Merry Wives of Windsor.” “I warrant thee,” replies Mistress Page, “if I do not act it, hiss me!” In the Roman theatres it is well known that the spectators pronounced judgment upon the efforts of the gladiators and combatants of the arena by silently turning their thumbs up or down, decreeing death in the one case and life

in the other. Hissing, however, even at this time was the usual method of condemning the public speaker of distasteful opinions. In one of Cicero's letters there is record of the orator Hortensius, "who attained old age without once incurring the disgrace of being hissed." The prologues of Ben Jonson and Beaumont and Fletcher frequently deprecate the hissing of the audience.

But theatrical censure, not content with imitating the goose, condescended to borrow from another of the inferior animals—the cat. Addison devoted one of his papers in the "Spectator" to a Dissertation upon Catcalls. In order to make himself master of his subject, he professed to have purchased one of these instruments, though not without great difficulty, "being informed at two or three toy-shops that the players had lately bought them all-up." He found that antiquaries were much divided in opinion as to the origin of the cat-call. A fellow of the Royal Society had concluded, from the simplicity of its make and the uniformity of its sound, that it was older than any of the inventions of Jubal. "He observes very well that musical instruments took their first rise from the notes of birds and other melodious animals, 'and what,' says he, 'was more natural than for the first ages of mankind to imitate the voice of a cat that lived under the same roof with them ?' He added that the cat had contributed more to

harmony than any other animal ; as we are not only beholden to her for this wind instrument, but for our string music in general." The essayist, however, is disposed to hold that the catcall is originally a piece of English music. " Its resemblance to the voice of some of our British songsters, as well as the use of it, which is peculiar to our nation, confirms me in this opinion." He mentions that the catcall has quite a contrary effect to the martial instruments then in use ; and instead of stimulating courage and heroism, sinks the spirits, shakes the nerves, curdles the blood, and inspires despair and consternation at a surprising rate. " The catcall has struck a damp into generals, and frightened heroes off the stage. At the first sound of it I have seen a crowned head tremble, and a princess fall into fits." He concludes with mention of an ingenious artist who teaches to play on it by book, and to express by it the whole art of dramatic criticism. " He has his bass and his treble catcall : the former for tragedy, the latter for comedy ; only in tragico-comedies they may both play together in concert. He has a particular squeak to denote the violation of each of the unities, and has different sounds to show whether he aims at the poet or the player," &c.

The conveyance of a catcall to the theatre evidences a predisposition to uproarious censure. Hissing may be, in the nature of impromptu criticism, suddenly provoked by

---

something held to be offensive in the representation ; but a playgoer could scarcely have armed himself with a catcall without a desire and an intention of performing upon his instrument in any case. Of old, audiences would seem to have delighted in disturbance upon very light grounds. Theatrical rioting was of common occurrence. The rioters were in some sort a disciplined body, and proceeded systematically. Their plan of action had been previously agreed upon. It was a rule that the ladies should be politely handed out of the theatre before the commencement of any violent acts of hostility ; and this disappearance of the ladies from among the audience was always viewed by the management as rather an alarming hint of what might be expected. Then wine was sent for into the pit, the candles were thrown down, and the gentlemen drew their swords. They prepared to climb over the partitions of the orchestra and to carry the stage by assault. Now and then they made havoc of the decorations of the house, and cut and slashed the curtains, hangings, and scenery. At Drury Lane, in 1740, when a riot took place in consequence of the non-appearance of Madame Chateau-neuf, a favourite French dancer, a noble marquis deliberately proposed that the theatre should be fired, and a pile of rubbish was forthwith heaped upon the stage in order to carry into effect this atrocious suggestion. At

the Haymarket Theatre, in 1749, the audience, enraged at the famous Bottle Conjuror hoax, were incited by the Culloden Duke of Cumberland to pull down the house ! The royal prince stood up in his box waving his drawn sword, which some one, however, ventured to wrest from his grasp. The interior fittings of the theatre were completely destroyed ; the furniture and hangings being carried into the street and made a bonfire of, the curtain surmounting the flaming heap like a gigantic flag. A riot at the Lincoln's Inn Fields, in 1721, led to George I.'s order that in future a guard should attend the performances. This was the origin of the custom that long prevailed of stationing sentries on either side of the proscenium during representations at the patent theatres. Of late years the guards have been relegated to the outside of the buildings. On the occasion of state visits of royalty to the theatre, however—although these are now, perhaps, to be counted among things of the past—Beefeaters upon the stage form an impressive part of the ceremonial.

Theatrical rioting has greatly declined in violence, as well it might, since the O.P. saturnalia of disturbance, which lasted some sixty-six nights at Covent Garden Theatre in 1809. Swords were no longer worn, but the rioters made free use of their fists, called in professional pugilists as their allies, and, in addition to catcalls, armed themselves with bells,

post-horns, whistles, and watchmen's rattles. The O.P. riots may be said to have abolished the catcall, but they established "goose." Captures of the rioters were occasionally made by Brandon, the courageous box-office keeper, and they were charged at Bow Street Police Court with persistent hissing, with noisily crying "Silence!" and with "unnatural coughing." The charges were not proceeded with, but one of the accused, Mr. Clifford, a barrister, brought an action against Brandon for false imprisonment. In this case the Court of King's Bench decided that, although the audience in a public theatre have a right to express the feelings excited at the moment by the performance, and in this manner to applaud or hiss any piece which is represented, or any performer; yet if a number of persons, having come to the theatre with a predetermined purpose of interrupting the performance, for this end make a great noise so as to render the actors inaudible, though without offering personal violence or doing injury to the house, they are in law guilty of a riot. Serjeant Best, the counsel for the plaintiff, urged that, as play and players might be hissed, managers should be liable to their share; they should be controlled by public opinion; Garrick and others had yielded cheerfully to the jurisdiction of the pit without a thought of appealing to Westminster Hall. "Bells and rattles," added the serjeant, "may be new to the pit; but catcalls,

which are equally stunning, are as old as the English drama." Apparently, however, the catcall, its claim to antiquity notwithstanding, was not favourably viewed by the court. In summing up, Chief Justice Mansfield observed : "I cannot tell on what grounds many people think they have a right, at a theatre, to make such a prodigious noise as to prevent others hearing what is going forward on the stage. Theatres are not absolute necessities of life, and any person may stay away who does not approve of the manner in which they are managed. If the prices of admission are unreasonable, the evil will cure itself. People will not go, and the proprietors will be ruined, unless they lower their demand. If the proprietors have acted contrary to the conditions of the patent, the patent itself may be set aside by a writ of *scire facias* in the Court of Chancery." To the great majority of playgoers it probably occurred that hissing was a simpler and more summary remedy of their grievances and relief to their feelings than any the Court of Chancery was likely to afford. In due time, however, came free trade in the drama and the abolition of the special privileges and monopolies too long enjoyed by the patent theatres.

After the failure of his luckless farce, "Mr. H.," Charles Lamb wrote to Wordsworth, "A hundred hisses (hang the word ! I write it like *kisses*—how different !), a hundred hisses

outweigh a thousand claps. The former come more directly from the heart." The reception of the little play had been of a disastrous kind, and Lamb, sitting in the front row of the pit, is said to have joined in condemning his own work, and to have hissed and hooted as loudly as any of his neighbours. "I had many fears ; the subject was not substantial enough. John Bull must have solider fare than a letter. We are pretty stout about it ; have had plenty of condoling friends ; but, after all, we had rather it should have succeeded. You will see the prologue in most of the morning papers. It was received with such shouts as I never witnessed to a prologue. It was attempted to be encored. . . . The quantity of friends we had in the house—my brother and I being in public offices, &c.—was astonishing, but they yielded at last to a few hisses." "Mr. H." could probably in no case have achieved any great success, but it may be that its failure was precipitated by the indiscreet cordiality of its author's "quantity of friends." They were too eager to express approbation, and distributed their applause injudiciously. The pace at which they started could not be sustained. As Monsieur Auguste, the famous *chef des claqueurs* at the Paris Opera House, explained to Doctor Véron, the manager, "*il ne fallait pas trop chauffer le premier acte ; qu'on devait, au contraire, résérer son courage et ses forces pour enlever le dernier acte et le dénouement.*"

He admitted that he should not hesitate to award three rounds of applause to a song in the last act, to which, if it had occurred earlier in the representation, he should have given one round only. Lamb's friends knew nothing of this sound theory of systematised applause. They expended their ammunition at the commencement of the struggle, and when they were, so to say, out of range. It was one of Monsieur Auguste's principles of action that public opinion should never be outraged or affronted ; it might be led and encouraged, but there should be no attempt to drive it. "Above all things, respect the public," he said to his subordinates. Nothing so much stimulates the disapprobation of the unbiassed as extravagant applause. Reaction certainly ensues ; men begin to hiss by way of self-assertion, and out of self-respect. They resent an attempt to coerce their opinion, and to compel a favourable verdict in spite of themselves. The attempt to encore the prologue to "Mr. H." was most unwise. It was a strong prologue, but the play was weak. The former might have been left to the good sense of the general public ; it was the latter that especially demanded the watchful support of the author's friends. The infirm need crutches, not the robust. The playbills announced, "The new farce of 'Mr. H.,' performed for the first time last night, was received by an overflowing audience with universal applause, and will be repeated for the second

time to-morrow." Such are playbills. "Mr. H." never that morrow saw. " 'Tis withdrawn, and there's an end of it," wrote Lamb to Wordsworth.

Hissing is no doubt a dreadful sound—a word of fear unpleasing to the ear of both playwright and player. For there is no revoking, no arguing down, no remedying a hiss; it has simply to be endured. Playgoers have a giant's strength in this respect; but it must be said for them, that of late years at any rate, they have rarely used it tyrannously, like a giant. Of all the dramatists, perhaps Fielding treated hissing with the greatest indifference. In 1743, his comedy of "The Wedding Day" was produced. Garrick had in vain implored him to suppress a scene which he urged would certainly endanger the success of the piece. "If the scene is not a good one, let them find it out," said Fielding. As had been foreseen, an uproar ensued in the theatre. The actor hastened to the green-room, where the author was cheering his spirits with a bottle of champagne. Surveying Garrick's rueful countenance, Fielding inquired, "What's the matter? Are they hissing me now?" "Yes, the very passage I wanted you to retrench. I knew it wouldn't do. And they've so horribly frightened me I shall not be right again the whole night." "Oh," cried the author, "I did not give them credit for it. So they have found it out, have

they?" Upon the failure of his farce of "Eurydice," he produced an occasional piece entitled "Eurydice Hissed," in which Mrs. Charke, the daughter of Colley Cibber, sustained the part of Pillage, a dramatic author. Pillage is about to produce a new play, and one of his friends volunteers to "clap every good thing till I bring the house down." "That won't do," Pillage sagaciously replies; "the town of its own accord will applaud what they like; you must stand by me when they dislike. I don't desire any of you to clap unless when you hear a hiss. Let that be your cue for clapping." Later in the play three gentlemen enter, and in Shakespearian fashion discuss in blank verse the fate of Pillage's production.

THIRD GENTLEMAN. Oh friends, all's lost! Eurydice is damned.  
SECOND GENTLEMAN. Ha! damned! A few short moments past

I came

From the pit door and heard a loud applause.

THIRD GENTLEMAN. 'Tis true at first the pit seemed greatly pleased,  
And loud applauses through the benches rung;  
But as the plot began to open more  
(A shallow plot) the claps less frequent grew,  
Till by degrees a gentle hiss arose;  
This by a catcall from the gallery  
Was quickly seconded: then followed claps;  
And 'twixt long claps and hisses did succeed  
A stern contention; victory being dubious.  
So hangs the conscience, doubtful to determine  
When honesty pleads here, and there a bribe.

\* \* \* \* \*

But it was mighty pleasant to behold  
When the damnation of the farce was sure,  
How all those friends who had begun the claps  
With greatest vigour strove who first should hiss  
And show disapprobation.

Surely no dramatist ever jested more over his own discomfiture. In publishing "Eurydice" he described it as "a farce, as it was d—d at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane." This was a following of Ben Jonson's example, who, publishing his "New Inn," makes mention of it as a comedy "never acted, but most negligently played by some of the king's servants, and more squeamishly beheld and censured by others the king's subjects, 1629 ; and now, at last, set at liberty to the readers, his majesty's servants and subjects, to be judged of, 1631."

There is something pathetic in the way Southerne, the veteran dramatist, in 1726, bore the condemnation of his comedy of "Money the Mistress," at the Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre. The audience hissed unmercifully. Rich, the manager, asked the old man, as he stood in the wings, "if he heard what they were doing ?" "No, sir," said Southerne, calmly, "I'm very deaf." On the first representation of "She Stoops to Conquer," a solitary hiss was heard during the fifth act at the improbability of Mrs. Hardcastle, in her own garden, supposing herself forty miles off on Crackskull Common. "What's that ?" cried Goldsmith, not a little alarmed at the sound. "Psha ! doctor," replied Colman, "don't be afraid of a squib when we have been sitting these two hours on a barrel of gunpowder." Goldsmith is said never to have forgiven Colman his ill-timed pleasantry. The hiss seems to

have been really a solitary and exceptional one. It was ascribed by one journal to Cumberland, by another to Hugh Kelly, and by a third, in a parody on “Ossian,” to Macpherson, who was known to be hostilely inclined towards Johnson and all his friends. The disapprobation excited by the capital scene of the bailiffs in Goldsmith’s earlier comedy, “The Good-natured Man,” had been of a more general and alarming kind, however, and was only appeased by the omission of this portion of the work. Goldsmith suffered exquisite distress. Before his friends, at the club in Gerrard Street, he exerted him greatly to hide the fact of his discomfiture; chatted gaily and noisily, and even sang his favourite comic song with which he was wont to oblige the company only on special occasions. But alone with Johnson he fairly broke down, confessed the anguish of his heart, burst into tears, and swore he would never write more. The condemnation incurred by “The Rivals” on its first performance led to its being withdrawn for revision and amendment. In his preface to the published play Sheridan wrote: “I see no reason why an author should not regard a first night’s audience as a candid and judicious friend attending, in behalf of the public, at his last rehearsal. If he can dispense with flattery, he is sure at least of sincerity, and even though the annotation be rude, he may rely upon the justness of the comment.” This is calm and complacent enough, but he proceeds with some

warmth : "As for the little puny critics who scatter their peevish strictures in private circles, and scribble at every author who has the eminence of being unconnected with them, as they are usually spleen-swoln from a vain idea of increasing their consequence, there will always be found a petulance and illiberality in their remarks, which should place them as far beneath the notice of a gentleman, as their original dulness had sunk them from the level of the most unsuccessful author." This reads like a sentence from "The School for Scandal."

In truth, hissing is very hard to endure. Lamb treated the misfortunes of "Mr. H." as lightly as he could, yet it is plain he took his failure much to heart. In his letter signed Semel-Damnatus, upon Hissing at the Theatres, he is alternately merry and sad over his defeat as a dramatist. "Is it not a pity," he asks, "that the sweet human voice which was given man to speak with, to sing with, to whisper tones of love in, to express compliance, to convey a favour, or to grant a suit—that voice, which in a Siddons or a Braham rouses us, in a siren Catalani charms and captivates us—that the musical expressive human voice should be converted into a rival of the noises of silly geese and irrational venomous snakes? I never shall forget the sounds on my night!" He urges that the venial mistake of the poor author, "who thought to please in the act of filling his pockets, for the sum of his demerits

amounts to no more than that," is too severely punished ; and he adds, " the provocations to which a dramatic genius is exposed from the public are so much the more vexatious as they are removed from any possibility of retaliation, the hope of which sweetens most other injuries ; for the public never writes itself." He concludes with an account, written in an Addisonian vein, of a club to which he had the honour to belong. "There are fourteen of us, who are all authors that have been once in our lives what is called damned. We meet on the anniversaries of our respective nights, and make ourselves merry at the expense of the public. . . . To keep up the memory of the cause in which we suffered, as the ancients sacrificed a goat, a supposed unhealthy animal, to *Aesculapius*, on our feast nights we cut up a goose, an animal typical of the popular voice, to the deities of Candour and Patient Hearing. A zealous member of the society once proposed that we should revive the obsolete luxury of viper-broth ; but, the stomachs of some of the company rising at the proposition, we lost the benefit of that highly salutary and antidotal dish."

It is to be observed that when a play is hissed there is this consolation at the service of those concerned : they can shift the burden of reproach. The author is at liberty to say, " It was the fault of the actors. Read my play, you will see that it did not deserve the cruel

treatment it experienced." And the actor can assert, "I was not to blame. I did but speak the words that were set down for me. My fate is hard—I have to bear the burden of another's sins." And in each case these are reasonably valid pleas. In the hour of triumph, however, it is certain that the author is apt to be forgotten, and that the lion's share of success is popularly awarded to the players. For the dramatist is a vague, impalpable, invisible personage ; whereas the actor is a vital presence upon the scene ; he can be beheld, noted, and listened to ; it is difficult to disconnect him from the humours he exhibits, from the pathos he displays, from the speeches he utters. Much may be due to his own merit ; but still his debt to the dramatist is not to be wholly ignored. The author is applauded or hissed, as the case may be, by proxy. But altogether it is perhaps not surprising that the proxy should oftentimes forget his real position, and arrogate wholly to himself the applause due to his principal.

High and low, from Garrick to the "super," it is probably the actor's doom, for more or less reasons, at some time or another, to be hissed. He is, as Members of Parliament are fond of saying, "in the hands of the house," and may be ill-considered by it. Any one can hiss, and one goose makes many. Lamb relates how he once saw Elliston, sitting in state, in the tarnished green-room of the Olympic Theatre, while

before him was brought for judgment, on complaint of prompter, "one of those little tawdry things that flirt at the tails of choruses—the pertest little drab—a dirty fringe and appendage of the lamp's smoke—who, it seems, on some disapprobation expressed by a 'highly respectable' audience, had precipitately quitted her station on the boards and withdrawn her small talents in disgust. 'And how dare you,' said the manager, 'how dare you, madam, without a notice, withdraw yourself from your theatrical duties?' 'I was hissed, sir.' 'And you have the presumption to decide upon the taste of the town?' 'I don't know that, sir, but I will never stand to be hissed,' was the rejoinder of Young Confidence. Then, gathering up his features into one significant mass of wonder, pity, and expostulatory indignation—in a lesson never to have been lost upon a creature less forward than she who stood before him—his words were these: 'They have hissed **ME!**'"

It is understood that this argument failed in its effect, for, after all, a hiss is not to be in such wise excused or explained away; its application is far too direct and personal. "Ladies and gentlemen, it was not I that shot the arrow!" said Braham to his audience, when some bungling occurred in the course of his performance of William Tell, and the famous apple remained uninjured upon the head of the hero's son. If derision was moved by this bungling, still

more did the singer's address and confession excite the mirth of the spectators. To another singer, failure, or the dread of failure, was fraught with more tragic consequence. For some sixteen years Adolphe Nourrit had been the chief tenor of the Paris Opera House. He had "created" the leading characters in "Robert," "Les Huguenots," "La Juive," "Gustave," and "Masaniello." He resigned his position precipitately upon the advent of Duprez. The younger singer afflicted the elder with a kind of panic. The news that Duprez was among his audience was sufficient to paralyse his powers, to extinguish his voice. He left France for Italy. His success was unquestionable, but he had lost confidence in himself; a deep dejection settled upon him, his apprehension of failure approached delirium. At last he persuaded himself that the applause he won from a Neapolitan audience was purely ironical, was but scoffing ill-disguised. At five in the morning, on the 8th of March, 1839, he flung himself from the window of an upper floor, and was picked up in the street quite dead. Poor Nourrit! he was a man of genius in his way; but for him there would have been no grand duet in the fourth act of "Les Huguenots," no cavatina for Eleazar in "La Juive;" and to his inventiveness is to be ascribed the ballet of "La Sylphide," which Taglioni made so famous.

It is odd to hear of an actor anxious for

---

“goose,” and disappointed at not obtaining it. Yet something like this happened once during the O.P. riots. Making sure that there would be a disturbance in the theatre, Mr. Murray, one of John Kemble’s company, thought it needless to commit his part to memory ; he was so certain that he should not be listened to. But the uproar suddenly ceased ; there was a lull in the storm. The actor bowed, stammered, stared, and was what is called in the language of the theatre “dead stuck.” However, his mind was soon at ease ; to do him justice the audience soon hissed him to his heart’s content, and perhaps even in excess of that measure. Subsequently he resolved, riot or no riot, to learn something of his part.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### EPILOGUES.

EPILOGUES went out of fashion with pig-tails, the public having at last decided that neither of these appendages was really necessary or particularly ornamental ; but a very considerable time elapsed before this opinion was definitively arrived at. The old English moralities or moral plays usually concluded, as Mr. Payne Collier notes, with an epilogue in which prayers were offered up by the actors for the king, queen, clergy, and sometimes for the commons ; the latest instance of this practice being the epilogue to a play of 1619, "Two Wise Men and All the Rest Fools." "It resteth now," says the "epiloguiser," "that we render you very humble and hearty thanks, and that all our hearts pray for the king and his family's enduring happiness, and our country's perpetual welfare. *Si placet, plaudite.*" So also the dancer entrusted with the delivery of the epilogue to Shakespeare's "Second Part of King Henry IV." may be

understood as referring to this matter, in the concluding words of his address: "My tongue is weary; when my legs are too, I will bid you good-night: and so kneel down before you—but, indeed, to pray for the queen." And to this old custom of loyal prayer for the reigning sovereign has been traced the addition of the words, "Vivat rex," or "Vivat regina," which were wont to appear in the playbills, until quite recent times, when our programmes became the advertising *media* of the perfumers.

The main object of the epilogue, however, was as Massinger has expressed it in the concluding address of his comedy, "Believe as You List"—

The end of epilogues is to enquire  
The censure of the play, or to desire  
Pardon for what's amiss.

Sometimes a sort of bluntness of speech was affected, as in the epilogue to one of Beaumont and Fletcher's comedies:

Why there should be an epilogue to a play  
I know no cause. The old and usual way  
For which they were made was to entreat the grace  
Of such as were spectators. In this place  
And time, 'tis to no purpose; for I know,  
What you resolve already to bestow  
Will not be altered, whatsoe'er I say  
In the behalf of us, and of the play;  
Only to quit our doubts, if you think fit,  
You may or cry it up or silence it.

It was in order, no doubt, the more to conciliate the audience that epilogues assumed, oftentimes, a playfulness of tone that would

scarcely have been tolerated in the case of prologues. The delivery of an epilogue by a woman (*i.e.* by a boy playing the part of a woman) was clearly unusual at the time of the first performance of "As You Like It." "It is not the fashion to see the lady the epilogue," says Rosalind; "but it is no more unhandsome than to see the lord the prologue. If it be true that good wine needs no bush, 'tis true that a good play needs no epilogue. Yet to good wine they do use good bushes; and good plays prove the better by the help of good epilogues." There can be little doubt that all Shakespeare's plays were originally followed by epilogues, although but very few of these have been preserved. The only one that seems deficient in dignity, and therefore appropriateness, is that above quoted, spoken by the dancer, at the conclusion of the "Second Part of King Henry IV." In no case is direct appeal made, on the author's behalf, to the tender mercies of the audience, although the epilogue to "King Henry VIII." seems to entertain misgivings as to the fate of the play:

'Tis ten to one this play can never please  
All that are here. Some come to take their ease,  
An act or two; but those we fear,  
We have frightened with our trumpets; so, 'tis clear  
They'll say, 'tis naught; others to hear the city  
Abused extremely and to cry—that's witty!  
Which we have not done neither; that, I fear,  
All the expected good we're like to hear  
For this play at this time is only in  
The merciful construction of good women:  
For such a one we showed them.

Prospero delivers the epilogue to "The Tempest," and the concluding lines of "The Midsummer Night's Dream," and of "All's Well that Ends Well"—which are not described as epilogues, and should, perhaps, rather be viewed as "tags"—are spoken by Puck and the King. The epilogues to "King Henry V." and "Pericles" are of course spoken by the Chorus, and Gower, respectively, who, throughout those plays, have favoured the spectators with much discourse and explanation. "Twelfth Night" terminates with the clown's nonsense song, which may be an addition due less to the dramatist than to the comic actor who first played the part.

The epilogues of the Elizabethan stage, so far as they have come down to us, are, as a rule, brief and discreet enough; but, after the Restoration, epilogues acquired greater length and much more impudence, to say the least of it, while they clearly had gained importance in the consideration of the audience. And now it became the custom to follow up a harrowing tragedy with a most broadly comic epilogue. The heroine of the night—for the delivering of epilogues now devolved frequently upon the actresses—who, but a few moments before, had fallen a most miserable victim to the dagger or the bowl, as the case might be, suddenly reappeared upon the stage, laughing, alive, and, it may be said, kicking, and favoured the audience with an address designed expressly, it

would seem, so to make their cheeks burn with blushes that their recent tears might the sooner be dried up. It is difficult to conceive now that certain of the prologues and epilogues of Dryden and his contemporaries could ever have been delivered, at any time, upon any stage. Yet they were assuredly spoken, and often by women, apparently to the complete satisfaction of the playgoers of the time. But, concerning the scandalous condition of the stage of the Restoration, there is no need to say anything further. The ludicrous epilogue, which has been described as the unnatural tacking of a comic tale to a tragical head, was certainly popular, however, and long continued so. It was urged, "that the minds of the audience must be refreshed, and gentlemen and ladies not sent away to their own homes with too dismal and melancholy thoughts about them." Certain numbers of the "*Spectator*" were expressly devoted to the discussion of this subject, in the interest, it is now apparent, of Ambrose Philips, who had brought upon the stage an adaptation of Racine's "*Andromaque*," and who enjoyed the zealous friendship of Addison and Steele. To the tragedy of "*The Distressed Mother*," as it was called, which can hardly have been seen in the theatre since the late Mr. Macready, as Orestes, made his first bow to a London audience in 1816, an epilogue had been added which had the good fortune to be accounted the most admirable production of its

class. Steele, under the signature of "Physibulus," wrote to describe his visit to Drury Lane, in company with his friend Sir Roger, to witness the new performance. " You must know, sir, that it is always my custom, when I have been well entertained at a new tragedy, to make my retreat before the facetious epilogue enters ; not but that these pieces are often very well written, but, having paid down my half-crown, and made a fair purchase of as much of the pleasing melancholy as the poet's art can afford me, or my own nature admit of, I am willing to carry some of it home with me, and cannot endure to be at once tricked out of all, though by the wittiest dexterity in the world." He describes Sir Roger as entering with equal pleasure into both parts, and as much satisfied with Mrs. Oldfield's gaiety as he had been before with Andromache's greatness ; and continues : " Whether this were no more than an effect of the knight's peculiar humanity, pleased to find that, at last, after all the tragical doings, everything was safe and well, I do not know ; but, for my own part, I must confess I was so dissatisfied, that I was sorry the poet had saved Andromache, and could heartily have wished that he had left her stone dead upon the stage. I found my soul, during the action, gradually worked up to the highest pitch, and felt the exalted passion which all generous minds conceive at the sight of virtue in distress. . . . But the ludicrous epilogue in the close extin-

guished all my ardour, and made me look upon all such achievements as downright silly and romantic." To this letter a reply, signed "Philomedes," appeared in the "Spectator" a few days later, expressing, in the first place, amazement at the attack upon the epilogue, and calling attention to its extraordinary success. "The audience would not permit Mrs. Oldfield to go off the stage the first night till she had repeated it twice; the second night, the noise of the *ancoras* was as loud as before, and she was obliged again to speak it twice; the third night it was still called for a second time, and, in short, contrary to all other epilogues, which are dropped after the third representation of the play, this has already been repeated nine times." "Philomedes" then points out that, although the prologue and epilogue were real parts of ancient tragedy, they are on the English stage distinct performances, entirely detached from the play, and in no way essential to it. "The moment the play ends," he argues, "Mrs. Oldfield is no more *Andromache*, but Mrs. Oldfield; and though the poet had left *Andromache* 'stone dead upon the stage' . . . Mrs. Oldfield might still have spoken a merry epilogue;" and he refers to the well-known instance of Nell Gwynne, in the epilogue to Dryden's tragedy of "Tyrannic Love," "where there is not only a death but a martyrdom," rising from the stage upon which she was supposed to be lying stone dead—an attempt

having been made to remove her by those gentlemen “whose business it is to carry off the slain in our English tragedies”—and breaking out “into that abrupt beginning of what was a very ludicrous but at the same time thought a very good epilogue—

Hold ! are you mad ? you damned confounded dog,  
I am to rise and speak the epilogue !”

“ This diverting manner,” “ Philomedes” proceeds, “ was always practised by Mr. Dryden, who, if he was not the best writer of tragedies in his time, was allowed by every one to have the happiest turn for a prologue or an epilogue.” And he further cites the example of a comic epilogue known to be written by Prior, to the tragedy of “ Phædra and Hippolita,” Addison having supplied the work with a prologue ridiculing the Italian operas. He refers also to the French stage : “ Since every one knows that nation, who are generally esteemed to have as polite a taste as any in Europe, always close their tragic entertainment with what they call a *petite pièce*, which is purposely designed to raise mirth and send away the audience well pleased. The same person who has supported the chief character in the tragedy very often plays the principal part in the *petite pièce* ; so that I have myself seen at Paris Orestes and Lubin acted the same night by the same man.”

This famous epilogue to “ The Distressed Mother” is spoken by Andromache, and opens

with the following lines, which are certainly flippant enough :

I hope you'll own that with becoming art  
I've played my game and topped the widow's part !  
My spouse, poor man, could not live out the play,  
But died commodiously on his wedding-day ;  
While I, his reliot, made, at one bold fling,  
Myself a princess, and young Sty a king.

Of this address the reputed author was Eustace Budgell, of the Inner Temple, whose name is usually found printed in connection with it—"the worthless Budgell," as Johnson calls him—"the man who calls me cousin," as Addison used contemptuously to describe him. In Johnson's Life of Ambrose Philips, however, it is stated that Addison was himself the real author of the epilogue, but that "when it had been at first printed with his name he came early in the morning, before the copies were distributed, and ordered it to be given to Budgell that it might add weight to the solicitation which he was then making for a place." It is probable, moreover, that Addison was not particularly anxious to own a production which, after all, was but a following of an example so questionable as Prior's epilogue to "Phædra," above mentioned. The controversy in the "Spectator" was, without doubt, a matter of pre-arrangement between Addison and Steele, for the entertainment of the public and the increase of the fame of Philips; and the letter of "Philomedes," which with the epilogue in question has been often ascribed to Budgell,

was probably also the work of Addison. For all the rather unaccountable zeal of Addison and Steele on behalf of their friend, however, the reputation of Philips has not thriven ; he is chiefly remembered now by the nickname of Namby-Pamby bestowed upon him by Pope, who had always vehemently contested his claims to distinction. As Johnson states the case : " Men sometimes suffer by injudicious kindness ; Philips became ridiculous, without his own fault, by the absurd admiration of his friends, who decorated him with honorary garlands which the first breath of contradiction blasted." Johnson, by the way, had at the age of nineteen written a new epilogue to " The Distressed Mother," for some young ladies who designed an amateur performance of that still-admired tragedy. The epilogue was intended to be delivered by " a lady who was to personate the ghost of Hermione."

But although protests were now and then, as in the case of " The Distressed Mother," raised against the absurdity of the custom, comic epilogues to tragic plays long remained in favour with the patrons of the stage. Pointed reference to this fact is contained in the epilogue spoken by the beautiful Mrs. Hartley to Murphy's tragedy of " Alzuma," produced at Covent Garden in 1773 :

Our play is o'er ; now swells each throbbing breast  
With expectation of the coming jest.  
By Fashion's law, whene'er the Tragic Muse  
With sympathetic tears each eye bedews ;

When some bright Virtue at her call appears,  
 Waked from the dead repose of rolling years ;  
 When sacred worthies she bids breathe anew,  
 That men may be what she displays to view ;  
 By Fashion's law with light fantastic mien  
 The Comic Sister trips it o'er the scene ;  
 Armed at all points with wit and wanton wiles,  
 Plays off her airs, and calls forth all her smiles ;  
 Till each fine feeling of the heart be o'er,  
 And the gay wonder how they wept before !

To Murphy's more famous tragedy of "The Grecian Daughter," Garrick supplied an epilogue, which commences :

The Grecian Daughter's compliments to all ;  
 Begs that for Epilogue you will not call ;  
 For leering, giggling, would be out of season,  
 And hopes by me you'll hear a little reason, &c.

The epilogue to Home's tragedy of "Douglas" is simply a remonstrance against the employment of "comic wit" on such an occasion :

An Epilogue I asked ; but not one word  
 Our bard will write. He vows 'tis most absurd  
 With comic wit to contradict the strain  
 Of tragedy, and make your sorrows vain.  
 Sadly he says that pity is the best  
 And noblest passion of the human breast ;  
 For when its sacred streams the heart o'erflow  
 In gushes pleasure with the tide of woe ;  
 And when its waves retire, like those of Nile,  
 They leave behind them such a golden soil  
 That there the virtues without culture grow  
 There the sweet blossoms of affection blow.  
 These were his words ; void of delusive art  
 I felt them ; for he spoke them from his heart.  
 Nor will I now attempt with witty folly  
 To chase away celestial melancholy,

Apart from the epilogues that pertained to particular plays, and could hardly be de-

tached from them, were the "occasional epilogues," written with no special relevancy to any dramatic work, but rather designed to be recitations or monologue entertainments, that could be delivered at any time, as managers, players, and public might decide. Garrick, who highly esteemed addresses of the class, was wont, in the character of "a drunken sailor," to recite a much-admired "occasional epilogue." Early comedians, such as Joe Haines and Pinkethman, now and then entered upon the scene, "seated upon an ass," to deliver "an occasional epilogue," with more mirthful effect. Extravagances of this kind have usually been reserved for benefit nights, however. In Tom Brown's works, 1730, there is a print of Haines, mounted on an ass, appearing in front of the stage, with a view of the side boxes and pit. An "occasional epilogue" was delivered in 1710, by Powell and Mrs. Spiller, "on the hardships suffered by lawyers and players in the Long Vacation."

For some years before their extinction, epilogues had greatly declined in worth, although their loss of public favour was less apparent. They were in many cases wretched doggerel, full of slang terms and of impertinence that was both coarse and dull. With a once famous epilogue-writer—Miles Peter Andrews, who was also a dramatist, although, happily, his writings for the stage have now vanished completely—Gifford deals severely in his

“Baviad.” “Such is the reputation this gentleman has obtained for epilogue writing, that the minor poets of the day, despairing of emulating, are now only solicitous of assisting him—happy if they can obtain admission for a couplet or two into the body of his immortal works, and thus secure to themselves a small portion of that popular applause so lavishly and so justly bestowed on everything that bears the signature of Miles Andrews !” A few lines make havoc of quite a covey of “bards” of that period.

Too much the applause of fashion I despise ;  
For mark to what 'tis given and then declare,  
Mean though I am, if it be worth my care.  
Is it not given to Este's unmeaning dash,  
To Topham's fustian, Colman's flippant trash,  
To Andrews' doggerel, when three wits combine,  
To Morton's catchword, Greathead's idiot line,  
And Holcroft's Shug Lane cant, and Merry's Moorfield's whine, &c.

Criticism was not mealy-mouthed in Gifford's day.

The “tag” appears to be following the epilogue to oblivion ; for though it is difficult to differentiate them, the tag must not be confused with the epilogue, or viewed as merely an abbreviated form of it. As a rule, the epilogue was divided from the play by the fall of the curtain, although this could hardly have been the case in regard to the epilogue mentioned above, delivered by “Mrs. Ellen,” as Dryden calls her, after the tragedy of “Tyrannic Love.” But the tag is usually the few parting words

addressed by the leading character in a play, before the curtain descends upon it, to "our kind friends in front," entreating their applause. The final *couplets* of a French vaudeville, it may be noted, usually contain an appeal of this kind; otherwise, tags and epilogues are alike eschewed upon the French stage. But this "coming forward" of the player, to deliver his tag, is a practice of old date. The concluding speech in Massinger's "New Way to Pay Old Debts," addressed to the audience, and commencing—

Nothing wants then  
But your allowance—and in that our all  
Is comprehended—

is, according to the old stage direction, to be spoken by Wellborn "coming forward." So also Cozimo is directed to "come forward," to address to the audience the last lines of "The Great Duke of Florence."

Epilogues have rarely been employed as supplementary acts, continuing and completing the action of a play, as prologues in modern times have been converted into introductory chapters, explanatory of events to be presently exhibited upon the scene. Yet the interminable drama of "Marie Antoinette," by Signor Paolo Giacometti, in which Madame Ristori lately performed in London, presents an instance of this kind. "Marie Antoinette" is in five acts, with a prologue exhibiting the queen's life at

Versailles, in 1786, and an epilogue showing her imprisonment in the Conciergerie, and her march to the guillotine in the custody of Samson the executioner.

The epilogue spoken, the entertainments are indeed terminated. The audience move from their seats towards the portals of the play-house; the lights are being extinguished; the boxes are about to be covered over with brown-holland draperies; the prompter has closed his book and is thinking of moving homewards.

It remains for us only to interchange “Good-byes”—and to separate.

THE END.

